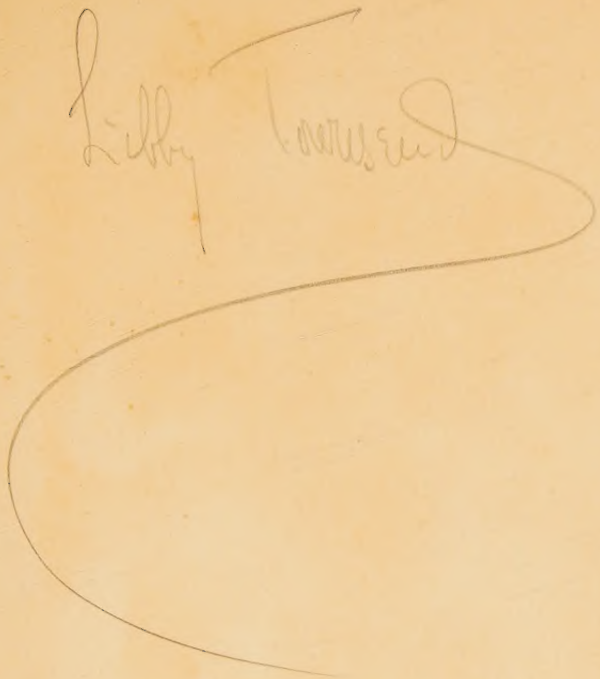
MAGIC LANTERNS

A BOOK
OF PLAYS

BY

LOUISE
SAUNDERS



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A Book of Plays

BY
LOUISE SAUNDERS

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TO

M. E. P.

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FIGUREHEADS

CHARACTERS

The Princess Felicia of Ponderay
Gertruda
Guard
The Prince of Domdometer
A Servant

FIGUREHEADS

An actor in gorgeous oriental costume appears before the curtain.
He speaks:

People—you who sit on the benches and look up at me waiting—how may we serve you? Is it your wish to be amused? Shall we give you the grotesque, magnified a thousand times to draw your laughter? Would you rather be stirred? Shall we show you how red wrath can bite, or would you prefer that we sound the heavy gongs of tragedy, once—again—*again*—shrouding your hearts in purple grief? Would you that we set jealousy to prowling on the stage with the guarded grace of a panther? Shall it be something wild, pagan, soulless, blowing before your eyes like paper in a hurricane, or a tale of love—the pursuit of a nymph through leafy forests, or the passion of some Harlequin for Columbine—a thing of roses and moonlight, as fragile as a butterfly's wing?

Do not, however, ask us for reality—do not ask us for life—because reality is dull and life is full of husks! Would you be here if we did not know

how to concentrate the thin, scattered color of the world for you—as if we drew salt out of the sea into a snowy mound, so that you might sift it through your fingers like sand, as if we pried gold from the rocks to make a ball of it, or a dagger to stab your spirits? Ha, we have you there, for what can you do if we should choose to use our knives! But no, suppose we give you the story of a princess to-night, a princess who might have lived anywhere, anywhen. Look down the centuries and select a year for her, but go to the realms of fantasy for her kingdom. Only there can you find a land that glows like colored glass, undimmed by cloud or mark of time.

I shall part the curtains and reveal to you our scene. If it meets with your approval, we shall proceed.

(*He draws the curtains, revealing the stage darkened and the players motionless.*)

We infer, from your kind applause, that so far we have pleased you. Let the play, therefore, begin.

The PRINCESS OF PONDERAY *is having her long red-gold hair brushed by* GERTRUDA, *her maid. She is lying on a low purple divan in a room*

overlooking the sea, whose blue shows through a great round window at the back. Leading up to the window are shallow steps covered with silken rugs. Three musicians, sitting on the floor, play languorous music. The PRINCESS *is absorbed in the contemplation of her bracelets, as she holds her arms in the air and lazily waves them to and fro. Suddenly she sits up.*

Princess (*excitedly*)

You pulled some of it out! I saw you trying to hide it in the pocket of your apron!

(GERTRUDA, *a fat, comfortable woman in a full gown of rich silk, drops the brush and comb and clutches her pocket.*)

Gertruda (*terrified, backing away*)

No, Highness. You are mistaken.

Princess (*striding over to her*)

I'm not mistaken. Let me see what you have there. (*To the musicians.*) Stop that noise!

Gertruda

Nothing, nothing, Majesty, I can assure you.

Princess (*seizing her by the wrist*)

Let me see. (*She puts her hand in* GERTRUDA'S *pocket and draws out a little fluff of hair. With an*

exclamation she holds it up between her thumb and finger.) Do you call that nothing? Idiot! My beautiful hair! You would ruin it with your clumsy stupidity. You would tear it out, little by little, until there wasn't any left. *No.* This is your punishment. You shall not be allowed to touch it again.

Gertruda

Highness, it is impossible to dress it without a little coming out in the comb. Every one's hair——

Princess

Every one's hair! Do you see anything in common between this and any other hair in the world?

Gertruda

No, no, Highness. It is truly as different as the sun is from the——

Princess (*sinking on the couch*)

Then never speak to me of "everybody's hair" again. Not one of mine must be sacrificed, not *one.*

Gertruda (*picking up the brush and comb and coming toward her ingratiatingly*)

It was for my little niece, Highness. I shouldn't have promised her, I know, but she pleaded so hard, poor child. "Aunt," she said to me, "you brush the princess's glorious hair," said she.

"Couldn't you get me the tiniest little strand to put in a locket to wear over my heart?" she said. "It was pitiful!

(*The* PRINCESS *smiles. She turns over and looks at* GERTRUDA.)

"And perhaps," she said, "some day I may be worthy to dress those wondrous locks myself," she said. I've always had a tender heart, Highness. It's like a lump of butter, as you know. "I'll try," I told her, "though it's as much as my life is worth." Well, now it's over. I must pay for my little impulse of generosity. (*She weeps.*) But at least, your Highness will grant me one boon. Let me take to my niece the little lock of hair that has caused her poor, unhappy aunt's downfall.

Princess

There, there, Gertruda, I'll forgive you this time. Only never let it happen again. (*She holds out the hair.*) You may give her this and tell her that I shall order sent to her, a little gold locket, rimmed with pearls, in which to keep it.

Gertruda (*rapturously, as she kisses the hem of the* PRINCESS's *dress*)

Your Highness is too, *too* good!

Princess

Never mind that. Go on with my hair.

(GERTRUDA *braids the* PRINCESS's *hair.*)

She is a child of taste, your niece.

Gertruda (*her eyes to heaven*)

Exquisite, Majesty, exquisite!

Princess

And her aunt is clever. (*To the musicians.*) Play. (*They play softly. The* PRINCESS *yawns.*) Pay me a compliment, Gertruda.

Gertruda

Her Highness's tresses are like——

Princess (*pouting*)

Oh, not spun gold. You have said that so often before.

Gertruda

There is nothing better than gold, Highness.

Princess

Nothing better than gold? I wonder if that's true. But love, Gertruda — you are always talking to me of love.

Gertruda (*sentimentally*)

Ah, love! Love is the sweetest story ever told.

Princess

Something tells me that you are right, Gertruda.

Not the sweetest, but the most—(*she draws a long breath*) the most exciting!

Gertruda

If our gracious Highness would only listen to the suit of our neighbor, the Prince of Domdometer——

(*The* PRINCESS, *in a rage, hurls a cushion at* GERTRUDA, *who dodges it, so that it hits a musician full in the face and stops his playing abruptly.*)

Princess

Haven't I told you never to mention his name to me again?

Gertruda

But your subjects wish it, Highness——

Princess

My subjects! Who are they that they should dictate to *me!* Am I not an autocrat? I rule them with a rod of iron. They cringe before me. Cringe, Gertruda, at once. Cringe!

(GERTRUDA *cringes, abjectly.*)

(*The* PRINCESS *giggles.*) Oh, Gertruda, you cringe so beautifully.

(*There is a knock at the door.* GERTRUDA, *still trembling, parts the curtains and opens it.*)

Gertruda

One of the guards, sweet Majesty.

Princess

Let him enter.

(*A guard comes in and kneels before the* PRINCESS. *He carries a roll of parchment.*)

Guard

Your Highness, I have a message from the envoys of the Prince of Domdometer.

Princess

What! Shall I never be rid of these envoys? Must I have them carried in carts to the edge of the city and dumped over the wall?

Guard

They have been waiting for your Highness to grant them the honor of an interview for six weeks.

Princess

I shall never grant them an interview. And what is more, I wish them to leave my country at once.

Guard

Your Highness is aware that the uniting of the two kingdoms of Ponderay and Domdometer is greatly to be desired. It would strengthen our

position enormously, and probably avert the war that threatens us both on the north.

Princess

I don't care. That's absolutely no reason why I should marry some one I don't choose to marry. Do you think I am a mere figurehead to be ordered about?

Guard

Your people——

Princess

My people! You can tell them to leave it to me. I am their ruler, do you hear? I care nothing for their desires. Besides, I may think of a much better plan—some time.

Guard

The envoys from the Prince of Domdometer wished me to give you these papers (*he hands the parchment to the* PRINCESS), in which they have written their urgent reasons for the union of the two countries.

(*She seizes the parchment and, tearing it again and again, dashes it out the window.*)

Princess

You can tell them that I have torn their reasons into a thousand pieces and thrown them into

the sea, and that's how much good they did. Must I be crowned over again before you realize that I am the Princess and I will not be told what to do—least of all, whom to marry? Go, all of you! (*The* PRINCESS *stands at the window while the* GUARD, GERTRUDA, *and the musicians bow themselves out; then she throws herself on the purple divan and buries her face in her arms, passionately weeping.*) How dare they! I wish I were dead—that's what I wish. Then they would see how much they need me. Then they would be sorry they hadn't left me alone and let me do as I pleased. I wish I were dead!

(*The* PRINCE OF DOMDOMETER *nimbly leaps through the window. His clothes are those of a poor man, a peasant, but around his neck hang two jewelled insignia, which he hides, after he has entered the room, under his gray shirt. He stands looking at the* PRINCESS, *who continues to weep, more impatiently than sadly, and to give little furious kicks with her feet. The* PRINCE OF DOMDOMETER *gazes about the room, then tiptoes to the left, takes up, curiously, one of the musicians' instruments and sits on the floor examining it.*)

Princess (*wailing*)

I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead!

Prince (*still looking over the instrument*)

Patience, dear lady. There is nothing surer than that your wish will be granted some day.

(*She sits up in astonishment.*)

And then, perhaps, you will wish you were alive, which will be a desire more worthy of your tears than this crying for a thing that will, in good time, inevitably come to pass.

Princess

Who are you?

Prince (*bowing*)

A poor man, fair lady, a fisherman by trade, I might say, for though I have never caught a fish, still I do own the nets which some day, perhaps, if I feel in the mood, I may use.

Princess

What are you doing? How did you get in this room? Do you know that you are in the presence of the princess?

Prince

Examining this lute, which I see is a fine one. By the sea. I do, quite well.

Princess

By the sea? You swam?

Prince

Yes, Princess, and lay on the rocks below your window, like a lizard in the sun, until I was dry enough to enter your presence.

Princess

You wanted to see the princess so much, poor fisherman, that you risked your life for a glimpse of her?

(*He bows.*)

You love me, I suppose—humbly, as one would a star!

Prince

Not at all. I love no one but myself, and humanity, of course, since humanity one can love and still neglect.

Princess

Then why——

Prince

I come as a messenger, your Highness, from the Prince of Domdometer.

(*The* PRINCESS *gives a shriek of rage and hurls the cushions at him, one after the other. He catches them dexterously.*)

I infer that these cushions annoy your Highness. Shall we banish them? (*He tosses them out the window.*)

Princess

I wish that you could do away with this prince so easily, who tortures me with his attentions until I am fairly *mad.*

Prince

Your Highness, I can quite understand your unwillingness to marry the Prince of Domdometer, who is, I'll admit, but a poor fellow——

Princess

You say that, his messenger?

Prince

No one knows it better than I. Still you must realize that he is as averse to marrying you, Princess, as you are to marrying him, and it is only because the welfare of the state demands it that he is willing to make the sacrifice.

Princess

Sacrifice:

Prince (*bowing*)

The prince, your Highness, desires to live his life with as few incumbrances as possible.

Princess

Listen, fisherman—come here to me. I am, oh, so unhappy—really in great trouble! Have you no pity?

Prince

Not to give to those who keep so much of their own pity for themselves, little princess.

Princess (*stamping her foot*)

But I am unhappy, you hard-hearted fisherman!

Prince

And who is not, Princess? The world inevitably equips us with trouble as nature equips us with teeth. Do you know of any one to whom you can point and say "He had none"? And the more of our joys we take for granted, the further we walk into unhappiness. "If only I were fed," cries the starving one, "I should be happy." But as soon as he is fed he forgets his relief from the pangs of hunger and longs for something else. Eternal struggle—eternal reaching up for things at which we scarcely glance when we have them, so intent are we to procure that which hangs on the peg above. But there are two troubles, Princess Felicia, more absorbing, more terrifically painful than all the rest! Beside them the others

seem pale things indeed. They are hunger and the realization that the rest of mankind considers us of little importance—lack of prestige, in short. Those two, you may be sure, your Highness will always be spared, if you behave yourself and do as you are told.

Princess

Do as I am told! *Never!* (*She stretches out her arms luxuriously.*) My people should realize that they are fortunate enough to have ruling over them a princess—with temperament!

Prince

They would prefer, no doubt, a princess with judgment, unless she will consent to be a figurehead. In that case the temperament would go very nicely.

Princess

A mere figurehead——

Prince

Is there any position more enviable than that of figurehead, Princess? Think. To be placed high above the world, with no function but that of looking pleasant—above its labors, responsibilities, and troubles. To be carried along, as an

important part of the ship of state, but bearing none of the burdens of the voyage.

Princess

Oh, you don't understand. What can a poor fisherman know of the cares and anxieties of royalty?

Prince

I know that it is better to be a fisherman than the fish on his hook, but even the fisherman must be clever, must seem to humor his fish a little, for if he does not there is danger of his being pulled into the water. Your people have never asked anything else of you, Princess, and think what they have bestowed upon you! This palace, those jewels, soft couches, musicians to play to you, their homage— You will have to marry where they please. It is your way of paying. If you don't pay—who knows what might happen?

Princess

Come here. I want to tell you something.

(*He starts to sit down. She rises indignantly.*) A fisherman may not sit in the presence of a princess.

Prince

I ask your pardon.

Princess (*smiling*)

Well, you may, since there is no one to see. It is much nicer.

Prince

Thank you.

Princess (*confidentially*)

Fisherman, you see I am very young and I feel that I have within me—(*she hesitates, then looks at him from under lowered lids*) infinite possibilities.

Prince

True. They are infinite.

Princess (*passionately*)

Then, in order to annex the kingdoms of Domdometer and Ponderay must I, in gaining this prince, lose *love?*

Prince

Not as great a loss, Princess, as you have been led to believe.

Princess (*astonished*)

You don't value love?

Prince

Many kinds of love, yes—the love given us by children, for instance, since that reflects some good in ourselves—but woman's love—it is largely

vanity. It is like a squash, beautiful, round, imposing—three parts water.

Princess

Oh——

Prince

If a woman sees in a man's eyes a flattering mirror she thinks she loves him, whereas it is only the idealization of herself that she sees there that she loves.

Princess

I don't know what you mean, but it sounds silly.

Prince (*thoughtfully, his hands clasped round his knees*)

But as well expect a good soldier, fully armed, to stay out of battle as a lovely woman to keep out of love. Its victories are so sweet—how can she remember that one day will come—defeat?

Princess

But victories first! Many, many victories first!

Prince (*shrugging his shoulders*)

Yes, if you think them worth the trouble.

Princess

I think them worth dying for!

Prince (*intensely*)

No, Princess Felicia, you think nothing worth dying for—that's just it. And for that reason I must warn you, if you don't consent to marry me——

Princess (*laughing*)

You!

Prince (*his hand on his lips*)

A mistake, your Highness.

Princess

There's an idea! I'll marry you!

Prince (*he strokes his chin, thoughtfully, looking at her*)

Why?

Princess (*excitedly*)

That will teach them a lesson! That will show them who is the real ruler of this kingdom, and your Prince of Domdometer, too! (*Pacing up and down.*) He sends a messenger, a fisherman, to plead for him. I refuse the hand of the prince for that of the messenger. It's delicious! (*Pointing a finger at him.*) You can't refuse. I command you.

Prince

Refuse, Princess? Oh, no, I shall not refuse.

Princess

Then, I'll have them upside down! They won't know what to make of it, poor things, but they will never again try to impose their wills on me—after they have once seen the consequence. It will be as if I had laughed in their solemn old faces —(*she stops*) Fisherman, does it make you happy?

Prince

I confess the idea is not unpleasing to me.

Princess

When—when shall I marry you? What a triumph!

Prince (*seriously, standing in front of her*)

Do you mean this?

Princess (*joyfully*)

Oh, I do, I do! You need have no fear. There will be a great change in your life, fisherman, after to-day.

Prince

Princess, you don't know who I am. I am not a fisherman——

Princess

I don't care who you are!

Prince (*thinking quickly*)

You will marry me, no matter who I am?

Princess (*dancing away from him*)

Yes, yes, yes, yes! What does it matter, as long as it takes their breath away?

Prince (*following her*)

You promise?

Princess

Nothing but death can prevent me.

Prince

Say "I swear to marry you no matter who you are——"

Princess (*impatiently*)

What a nuisance! Are you that kind of person——

Prince

No, but I borrow that kind of person's methods once in a while, and this time it is quite necessary, as you will see in a minute.

Princess

Well, then, I swear to marry you no matter who you are. Are you satisfied now?

Prince

Quite. But my satisfaction is tempered with regret at having to tell you that I am—the Prince of Domdometer.

Princess (*she stares at him in utter aston-*

ishment, which changes to rage and hatred. In a choked voice.)

I don't believe you.

(He exhibits, without a word, the jewelled insignia around his neck. She turns furiously to the divan for a cushion to throw at him.)

Prince

You have banished them, Felicia. (*He leans out the window.*) They are there, far below, on the rocks. That is the trouble with banishment. I have invariably found that the banished one was, after all, in spite of his iniquities, useful.

Princess (drawing in a long breath, through closed teeth)

Oh—you cheat! You are all of you cheats!

Prince

Perhaps. But, remember, you have given your promise.

Princess

Nothing but death can prevent me, I said. I shall call the guards to hurl you from the window. You are a peasant, they will think. You have intruded—annoyed me. It will be short work to send you crashing to the rocks!

Prince

Very thrilling, Princess, and an easy way out of your difficulties. If you do that I shall admire you, enormously, for a woman of conviction and character.

Princess (*scornfully*)

You would have little time for that.

Prince

Oh, yes. This tower is high. All the while I was flipping, flopping, turning through the air, like a fish, thrown by its tail over a wall, I should be admiring you. But you won't do it. You haven't the courage.

Princess

It is you who need courage.

Prince

Oh, no, Princess, since it would be only a relief to me to slip the world from my shoulders like a muddy cloak. When a heart cries as clamorously as mine, how often does one long to still it forever with a sharp stab of sudden pain! (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) But we must live, Princess. That's a rule one feels, blindly enough, one may not break. We are all part of a great game, and

when the veiled player has set a little top a-spinning, it must keep it up until it's time is over.

Princess

You think I don't dare?

Prince

No, you don't dare, because you are a little kitten woman. You have not the force, you have not the ability, you have not the innate hardness and cruelty to be a real ruler. That is why they make of you a figurehead.

(*She stamps her feet.*)

A very charming little figurehead—and why should you care? These "leaders of men," how they shout, how they bellow, how they run back and forth and grow red in the face, trying to make the herds go down a road of their choosing instead of another, only to be trampled at last, even if they succeed, under a thousand hoofs! Do you want to be one of those in the dust and clamor? Rather let us watch them from a balcony, sitting cross-legged, our toes tucked delicately under our knees, cool, serene, and happy!

Princess (*angrily*)

You are talking absolute nonsense. It doesn't

mean anything. I am a real ruler. I *am* a woman of character, I *am!*

Prince

Prove it by having me thrown from the window.

Princess

You seem almost to want me to.

Prince

No, not at all. And that proves that I am not unmindful of my duties as prince, for the only real service I can do my kingdom is to marry you. How gladly would I have given my life to accomplish it, but if I gave my life it could never be accomplished, so I was forced to trick you into it. I am very sorry, but it had to be done. You won't have me killed. You couldn't. For though you know how to scratch and spit, little kitten, you will always draw in your claws before they do real hurt.

Princess

Oh, if you knew how I *hated* you! You have gone too far. Take back what you said, every word, or you will pay for it—with death!

(*He smiles. Exasperated, almost to frenzy, she strikes the gong a hard blow. Two guards appear.*)

This fellow had the presumption to climb up the tower into my window. He has annoyed me. Throw him out, to the rocks.

Guard

But, your Highness——

Princess

Do as I command!

Prince

May I request that you tell them to throw me with force, so that my eventual destination may be the water rather than the rocks? It will be pleasanter for me and for you too, perhaps, afterward, or I wouldn't mention it.

Princess (*with closed eyes*)

Tie him, hand and foot, so that he cannot swim, and throw him into the sea.

Guard

Highness, we have nothing——

Princess

Use this. (*She seizes a scarf of peacock blue and tears it across.*) And this.

(*The guards tie the* PRINCE'S *feet. He holds out his hands, which they bind with the scarf. They lift him.*)

Guards

Now——

Princess. (*She gives a shriek of terror and throws herself upon them.*)

You blockheads! I didn't mean it! ~~Put him down!~~ ~~*Put him down!*~~ I tell you! How can you have been so stupid? Didn't you know that I was just testing you? Go, go at once!

(*The guards go out. Breathlessly and half-sobbing she unties the scarfs and kisses the* PRINCE'S *wrists.*)

Oh, my beloved! I almost had you thrown into the sea!

Prince

You did.

Princess

Oh, how I love you! Can you ever forgive me? What was I but a bundle of dry sticks that you have kindled to leaping flames! What was I but a little empty cup into which you have thrown a jewel! And then to treat you like that! It was monstrous! Oh, I love you! Say that you will forgive me. Listen—I shall make it up to you. You will see. I will be to you sweet nectar, such as you have never known in your life

before. I will give you heady wine that will make you forget the world and live only to taste it again. When you are unhappy I shall share your sorrow, when you are glad I will double your joy——

Prince (*freeing himself from her embrace*)

You must not read so many books. They make you talk like that. When I am unhappy it will be, no doubt, often because you have made me so, and I hope that I may have joys which you do not share, else what would I do when you were campaigning for those victories you prophesied just now? Those "many, many victories"?

Princess (*pouting*)

That's not nice of you. Every beat of my heart says "Prince of Domdometer, Prince of my soul, Prince of Domdometer, Prince of my soul!"

Prince (*laughing*)

Every beat of your heart says "Me, me, me, *me*"—and it's a more normal little heart for that reason, for if it should try to say so acrobatic a thing as "Prince of Domdometer, Prince of my soul," it would soon be out of order.

Princess (*sadly*)

You don't admire me now.

Prince

Oh, I do, I do, very much indeed. I admire your red-gold hair—who could help it?—and your pretty white skin. As for your convictions and your character—shall a figurehead marry a woman of conviction? Never. Soft little kitten women do better for him.

Princess

Well, I think if it has to be one or the other, I would rather that you admired my hair than my convictions.

Prince

Wisely spoken, Princess, and when my envoys come to you, asking your hand, you will say "yes"?

Princess (*passionately*)

A thousand times, yes.

Prince

Once will be sufficient. Come, Princess, sit here with me, and I will give you a treat. Have you ever tasted bread and cheese?

Princess

Bread and cheese?

(*They sit down on the shallow steps leading to the window. He takes some yellow cheese and a piece of bread from the leather bag at his waist.*)

Prince

There is nothing better, Princess Felicia, than bread and cheese. It represents the facts of life. I am what I am! But it is seldom given to us rulers. We have to find it for ourselves.

Princess (*tasting it*)

It is good. Oh, so good!

Prince

Exactly. Let us stick to it. (*He takes one of her long braids and winds it about their necks as they sit together.*) When I was climbing the tower I received a shower of paper full in my face. Can you explain that interesting phenomenon?

Princess (*purring*)

They were reasons, beloved, why I ought to marry you.

Prince (*thoughtfully*)

Mmmm—they almost made me lose my balance.

Princess

Did they, poor dear one? Kiss me.

Prince

If I kissed you, it would only make me want to kiss you again.

Princess (*eating the bread and cheese*)

Well, you could.

Prince

And those two kisses would serve what purpose? Only to make a third kiss desirable, and that a fourth, so that when I left you, as I must very soon, the thought of the fifth one would fill me with longing to be here, so that I might capture it. What is the use in deliberately creating a wish for a thing one may not satisfy?

Princess

You won't long for me now, when you go away?

Prince

Not particularly.

Princess (*wailing*)

Oh!

Prince

Never mind. When I have once decided to plunge into the sea of love I shall sink to the bottom, view the world, distorted and greened through its waters, and ask for nothing more than permission to lie there forever.

Princess (*clapping her hands*)

Oh, how happy I shall be then!

Prince

Yes, you greedy little tyrant! Women are always made happy when they have overthrown a man's reason and robbed him of his judgment, his two most precious possessions.

Princess

How beautiful you look when you talk! Oh, I do love you so! You are so strong! You are like a tall, slim pillar, reaching to the sky. (*She giggles.*) What a *crash* there will be when you fall!

Prince

Take care, Princess. If you warn me like that of the consequences, I may refuse to kiss you at all.

Princess (*pleadingly*)

Oh, please——

Prince

Perhaps, if you are good. But I am resolved to stay on shore as long as possible, and in the meantime—bread and cheese!

(*There is a loud knock at the door.* GERTRUDA'S *frightened voice outside.*)

Gertruda

Highness, sweet Majesty— Oh, your Highness!

Princess (*excitedly*)

You must go.

(*He climbs through the window and stands on a ledge outside.*)

Wait there, please. I have more to say to you. Crouch down a little. Can you do it? Oh, don't fall!

(*He lowers himself so that only his hand, clutching the window, is visible.*)

Prince

Hurry, Princess. This is not a position in which I would care to stay very long.

(*She sounds the gong.* GERTRUDA *enters, breathless with excitement, and flings herself at the* PRINCESS'S *feet.*)

Gertruda

There's trouble, your Highness! Oh, woe is me! It's terrible, terrible, terrible! "You ungrateful dogs," I shouted at them, "don't you dare disturb my sweet Majesty!" "Sweet Majesty!" they jeered back, and threw a stick at me. It hit me on the arm. Not that I mind, but when——

Princess (*impatiently*)

What is the matter, Gertruda? Speak plainly!

Gertruda

Such trouble, Highness—and not a word could I——

(*A guard enters rapidly. He kneels before the* PRINCESS)

Guard

Your Highness, an angry crowd is swelling at the gates of the palace. We fear a revolution. Ever since your Highness refused to give an audience to the envoys of the prince, there has been intense unrest in the capital——

Gertruda (*weeping*)

I tried to keep it from you, Majesty, as best I——

Guard

And now that they have heard from one who was in the room at the time (*he pauses and looks at* GERTRUDA)——

Gertruda

Not I, Majesty. No, never, as long as——

Guard

Now that they have heard of your Highness tearing up the envoy's message to you and throwing it into the sea, they demand, in spite of all that we can do, that you give audience——

Princess

Oh, is that all! Tell them to come at once. I shall receive them.

Guard (*astonished*)

You will——

Gertruda (*gasping*)

Majesty!

Princess

You may tell the people at the gate that I am hurt at their lack of trust in me. Do they not know that my only desire is to serve them as best I can? Since it is their wish that I marry this prince, I shall bend my will to theirs, though my heart in doing it should break.

Gertruda

No, no——

Guard

Your Highness will marry the Prince of Domdometer?

Princess

What better could I do with my life than to sacrifice it in the interest of Ponderay? Go! I have spoken! (*She waves him away. He goes out.*)

Gertruda

Oh, my noble Highness! A martyr, a martyr to your country's good! They will not forget—your people, they will never forget. Oh, sweet Majesty!

Princess

Be quiet, Gertruda. Do that outside, if you must.

(GERTRUDA, *still overcome, goes out. The* PRINCESS *flies to the window.*)

Beloved!

(*The* PRINCE'S *head and shoulders appear again.*)

Was not that nice?

Prince

Beautiful.

Princess

And now good-by. (*She leans over as he clings with both arms to the window and kisses him lightly.*)

Prince

Felicia, that was a mean advantage to have taken of my position. You shouldn't have done that, but—do it again.

Princess

No, not again. It will be a little string, tied around your heart and mine.

Prince

I don't want to fall in love with you, Felicia. It would be a nuisance.

Princess (*happily*)

You won't be able to help it!

(*There is a sound of trumpets.*)

Now go. When next we meet, we shall be clothed in jewels and robes of state—beautiful figureheads!

(*He disappears, climbing down the tower. She leans out, looking at him.*)

How your hair shines in the sun! I love you!

Prince (*from below*)

How yours glorifies the shadow! I love you!

Princess

Where is your reason and your judgment, my Prince?

Prince's Voice

They have just come to me.

Princess

Shall I throw you this bit of bread and cheese, wise one, or would you prefer a rose?

Prince

A rose from you, always. A rose!

(*She breaks a rose from a vine climbing the tower, kisses it, and tosses it down to him.*

Then she turns swiftly into the room, her eyes shining, and makes a gesture of triumph, the same gesture that she made a short while before when she said, "What a crash there will be when you fall." A louder blast of trumpets. She flies to the couch and assumes an attitude of great dignity. The guard parts the curtains and announces, ceremoniously.)

Guard

Envoys with message from his royal Highness, the Prince of Domdometer!

CURTAIN

OUR KIND

CHARACTERS

Maddox
Cromwell Petrie
Esther Prentiss

OUR KIND

SCENE: *"Wave Crest." A cottage rented by* CROMWELL PETRIE, *America's most distinguished actor, who is "resting after an arduous season," etc., at Palm Beach. Although only a hotel cottage, it has quite an air of gaiety and comfort. There are deep lounges, artistically cushioned, and wide windows tastefully curtained —photographs on the mantelpiece and on the table. There are also books—Meredith, Kenneth Graham, Du Maurier, Stevenson, Wells, for no one appreciates a certain type of good book better than does* CROMWELL PETRIE. *He luxuriates in it, lives it, and dies a little death when it is finished. The attendants have been made clearly to understand that* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *books must follow him everywhere, that they must, as he travels from place to place, faithfully tag at his heels.*

When the curtain rises CROMWELL PETRIE'S *valet,* MADDOX, *is discovered lying on the lounge, smoking a cigarette and reading a newspaper.*

MADDOX *is not at all of "the old faithful retainer" type, but a tall Englishman, dark and clean-shaven.*

CROMWELL PETRIE *comes in through the wide doors at the back that give a glimpse of a spacious and airy hall. He is in flannels. He looks particularly well in flannels. There is an air of breeding about him; there is, too, something else, indescribable. He has been fêted, he has been biographed, he has been honored by kings, and, better still, by queens. It has left its mark on him!*

Maddox (*jumping up and extinguishing his cigarette*)

You've caught me, sir!

Petrie

So I see. However, you needn't think that I am elated about it. Frequent repetition has dulled all element of sport that the situation might have held. It is like catching a tame puppy.

Maddox

I'm sorry, sir.

Petrie (*severely*)

Maddox, you must not smoke my cigarettes,

particularly in the drawing-room. Do you understand?

Maddox

You shouldn't leave such good ones around, sir.

Petrie

I gave you equally good ones for your own use to keep you from smoking mine.

Maddox (*taking* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *hat and stick*)

Thank you, Mr. Petrie. (*Hopefully.*) Perhaps, if you should give me some superior ones for my own use——

Petrie

You're damned impertinent, Maddox, and I warn you I don't feel in the mood for it. Did any one call?

Maddox

Only some young women, sir.

Petrie

Young women! What did they want?

Maddox

The usual thing, sir. They walked up and down several times, looking at the house and laughing. They seemed to be encouraging one another.

Finally one of them came up the path and rang the bell. She asked for a collar button, sir.

Petrie

A collar button!

Maddox

Yes, sir. A collar button, a scarf or something of that sort, she said, sir, that had belonged to you. It was *quite* the usual thing.

Petrie

You gave her a collar button, I hope.

Maddox

I gave her one of mine, sir.

Petrie (*thoughtfully*)

Mmm—and that did just as well?

Maddox (*nodding*)

Just as well, sir, since she didn't know.

Petrie (*somewhat relieved*)

Ah, she didn't know?

Maddox

No, sir.

Petrie

And yet, after all, it is perhaps strange that pretty young girls should desire these little—er—articles from my wardrobe. Should value the collar buttons of a man with gray hair, who is

"getting on"—a man who has, in fact, been "on" for several years—value them above those of a good-looking young chap like you for instance?

Maddox (*with marked sincerity*)

I think it perfectly amazing, sir.

Petrie

Oh, you do, do you?

Maddox (*putting down* CROMWELL PETRIE'S *hat and stick and coming forward*)

It's perverted nature, sir. That's what it is; and civilization is responsible for it.

Petrie

Civilization? Explain yourself, my dear Maddox.

Maddox

Yes, sir. (*He clears his throat.*) Think of the birds, sir.

Petrie

I'm thinking of them.

Maddox

Think of the young birds of the air, sir, as I said before, and the young animals——

Petrie

Of the forest.

Maddox

Yes, sir, and the young——

Petrie (*impatiently*)

Bees of the apiary, fish of the streams. Well, after we have pondered on these juvenile quadrupeds and reptiles, what then?

Maddox

I was about to say that it's youth to youth with them, sir, and nothing more, whereas, in the case of the human race, it is fame attracts the young, or, if not fame, riches, sir.

Petrie

Really, Maddox, how can this deeply philosophic nature of yours refuse the small parts that I offer you in my plays? I should think that it would jump at them, if natures—er—can jump.

Maddox

I prefer being your man, Mr. Petrie. You see, I've always been a man ever since I was a boy, sir; not to speak of my uncle and cousins. It doesn't seem natural to be anything else.

Petrie

That's very interesting. I suppose no matter how gaily we dressed him, in the garb of Roman citizen, Venetian courtier, or what-not, one's man

would still remain a man for a' that. Perhaps that's what Burns was driving at. Do you think so, Maddox?

Maddox

I'm very fond of Burns, sir.

Petrie

Are you *really*, Maddox? I can't stand him myself. All marked over with little stars, so that you have to get the sense of the thing in the footnotes. Here's a poem for you, Maddox, an aristocrat among poems. (*He takes a book out of his pocket and reads as only the great* CROMWELL PETRIE *can read.*)

"Before thy shrine I kneel, an unknown worshipper
Chanting strange hymns to thee and sorrowful litanies;
Incense of dirges, prayers that are as holy myrrh.
Ah, goddess, on thy throne of tears and faint low sighs,
Weary at last to theeward come the feet that err,
And empty hearts grown tired of the world's vanities.
How fair this cool deep silence——"

(*He sees a letter on the table back of the lounge.*)

Why didn't you tell me there was a letter from Mrs. Petrie? You scoundrel, Maddox——

Maddox

You seemed a bit downhearted when you came in, sir. I didn't want to mention anything—unpleasant.

(Cromwell Petrie *tears open the letter. He reads it, frowning, and clinches it in his hand.*)

Maddox (*opening the draw of the table*)

Here is your check-book, sir, and pen and ink.

Petrie (*smiling in spite of himself*)

You are rather amusing, Maddox.

Maddox

Thank you, sir.

Petrie

Mrs. Petrie's letters and my check-book seem to be strangely connected in your mind. However, I won't write her immediately. She wants me to subscribe to the league for the preservation of something. I can't quite make it out. It looks like rolling stones, but, of course, it couldn't be rolling stones. The preservation of rolling stones —no, it doesn't sound right. I shall have to think it over.

(CROMWELL PETRIE *has a talent for making queer little animals out of paper. He starts now to shape a dog, rather like a dachshund, out of Mrs. Petrie's letter.* MADDOX *takes up the hat and stick again.*)

(*Fiercely.*) Why can't she leave me alone? Why, Maddox, *why?* (*He glares at* MADDOX.)

Maddox

Are you making an observation, Mr. Petrie, or are you asking for my opinion?

Petrie

Your opinion? Of course, I don't want your opinion.

Maddox

No, sir. (*He starts to go.*)

Petrie

Still, I shan't mind, if you care to——

Maddox (*returning*)

Yes, sir. I think that the reason Mrs. Petrie won't let you alone is because you let her alone so much, sir, and the reason you let her alone is because she takes you seriously, sir.

Petrie

Takes me seriously?

Maddox

You say things so beautifully, Mr. Petrie, so nobly, sir, that she thinks you mean them, if you will excuse me for saying so.

Petrie

Nonsense, Maddox. That's enough. (CROMWELL PETRIE *busies himself again with the dachshund's tail.* MADDOX *leans pensively against the table.*) You have things to do, I suppose?

Maddox

You don't need me now, sir?

Petrie

I didn't need you before.

(MADDOX *takes up the hat and stick again.*)

Maddox (*looking out of the window*)

Here is another of them, Mr. Petrie.

Petrie

Another of what?

Maddox

Young women, sir.

Petrie

Confound them, those people! They've no mental modesty. Have you a collar button handy?

Maddox

No, sir; you see mine is pinned.

Petrie

You should keep a bowlful of them on the table. Tell her that I'm not at home.

Maddox

Yes, sir. (MADDOX *can be heard in the hall.*) Mr. Petrie is not at home, madam. (*Then there is a sudden, very marked change in* MADDOX'S *voice. He becomes quite, even eagerly, respectful.*) Oh, Miss Prentiss, I beg your pardon! For a moment I didn't recognize you. The light behind you was so strong. Mr. Petrie is in the drawing-room, madam.

Petrie (*rising*)

Who the dickens!

Maddox (*at the door—very impressively*)

Miss Prentiss to see you, sir.

Petrie

Miss Prentiss? (*He glowers at* MADDOX.)

Esther Prentiss (*outside*)

I'm afraid that you don't know me, Mr. Petrie. May I come in just the same? (*She appears at the door, lovely, in every sense of that beautiful word. She has distinctly what the critics call "charm,"*

and is young enough to know that she need not overwork it.)

Maddox (*on fire with desire to put* MR. PETRIE *in his place*)

Miss Esther Prentiss, sir.

Petrie

How do you do, Miss Esther Prentiss? (*He clearly doesn't know her. Then it dawns on him.*) Oh, *oh*, my dear fellow artist. Of course I know you! Have you just arrived at Palm Beach?

Esther

Just about arrived. This is the first sightseeing I have done.

Maddox (*proudly*)

There were two pictures of Miss Prentiss in *The Times* Supplement last Sunday, Mr. Petrie, and only one of you, sir.

Petrie

Indeed! That shows the sound, good judgment of our press.

Esther

No, not of our press, Mr. Petrie, only of *The Times*. You see, there were two of you in *The Evening Post* Supplement and only one of me. You appeal to the conservatives.

Petrie

Yes, the older one gets, the more one appeals to the conservatives, I've noticed. That will do, Maddox.

(*Exit* MADDOX.)

Esther

Who is that nice boy?

Petrie

That is my man, by profession, an actor on the side. I'm afraid that his histrionic experiences have rather taken the edge off his good manners. He was perfect when I brought him over. Try this chair, Miss Prentiss. It's the only comfortable one in the cottage.

Esther

Thank you. (*Looking after* MADDOX.) He is, I suppose, what one might call a personable young man, extremely personable. Perhaps he is the youngest son of a great house, who has disgraced himself in some way. He looks so, don't you think so?

Petrie

He looks very much as if he might have disgraced himself. He tells me the truth; that's why I keep him, I suppose. Flattery is such a bore.

Esther

Do you think so? I like flattery and attention. Don't you enjoy walking through a crowd, sailing into a dead sea of silence and leaving a trail of whisper and comment as a steamer leaves a trail of foam? Oh! flattery is soothing. But I never believe it, never, never.

Petrie

You, fortunately, can believe it if you want to.

Esther

That was very nice of you. I think that it was nice of you. Was it?

Petrie

It was intended to be.

Esther (*dubiously*)

Thank you. (*There is a pause, then she turns to him.*) I've come to talk to you about something very important.

Petrie

Do you know, you've changed very much since I saw you last.

Esther

Oh, that's because I'm just beginning to *feel* pretty. It takes years of prettiness to feel pretty when one has been a plain child and, unless one

feels pretty, to oneself, there is no use in *being* it—It doesn't take, somehow. May I have a cigarette?

Petrie

I beg your pardon.

Esther (*determinedly*)

As I said before, I came here to ask you something, something of great importance—(*She hesitates.*) Can you guess why I smoke cigarettes when I hate them? That isn't the question of great importance, of course.

Petrie

Because you do it so prettily.

Esther

No, because I want to be known as a devilish person.

Petrie

I don't think that smoking cigarettes will give you that reputation.

Esther

It will help. Of course, it takes much longer to be thought devilish when one doesn't inhale.

Petrie

Why don't you inhale?

Esther (*in a whisper, looking around*)

It chokes me.

Petrie

I'm sorry to be discouraging, but I'm afraid one has to be born devilish to manage it successfully.

Esther

Oh, don't say that! The critics are always writing about my naïveté, my ingenuousness, my unsophistication. I don't like it at all. As a matter of fact—(*she sits on the sofa and tucks her feet up under her*)—as a matter of fact, I long to be a vampire or something like that.

Petrie

There is nothing like that.

Esther

Don't you like vampires?

Petrie

I've never seen one—with charm—and a vampire without charm is like a lion without claws or teeth.

Esther (*delighted*)

An epigram! Do you know, I'm having a beautiful time with you. In a minute—(*she takes a long breath*)—in a minute I shall tell you what I came for.

Petrie

So am I. Don't hurry about it.

Esther

What I came for is so appalling, so—cataclysmic, if there is such a word, that I shrink from taking the plunge. I have trembled on the brink of asking you several times.

Petrie

I am beginning to be interested.

Esther (*looking about*)

These are not rooms, are they?

Petrie

It's one room. Rather a nice one, don't you think so?—view of the sea and all that.

Esther

No; I mean "rooms," you know; the kind they have in plays. Whenever one reads, scene-so-and-so's rooms, on the programme, one can feel sure that there is going to be a screen or a side door through which the heroine hurriedly conceals herself when her brother, dishevelled, menacing, and suspicious, makes his entrance. I'm really much too comfortable to *think* of hurriedly concealing myself.

Petrie (*reassuringly*)

This is a house.

Esther

Oh, yes, that makes it perfectly all right, its being a house, doesn't it? Besides—(*happily*) I haven't any brother.

Petrie

Then the whole thing is perfectly respectable.

Esther

I might as well tell you now. It sticks in my throat. I had no idea that it would be so hard.

Petrie

My dear child, I should be only too happy to do anything for you in my power——

Esther

Don't be paternal, Mr. Petrie. It makes it harder. Oh, how can I say it! If I only could be sure—that you were one of our kind. I'm almost sure, but——

Petrie (*with bitterness*)

Let's hope that I'm not any particular kind, Miss Prentiss. I've always considered myself rather unique, and it's a jolly good thing for Maddox's "human race" that I am unique. A

round peg, wabbling about in this square hole of a world, trying to pretend that he fits it, like the others.

Esther (*solemnly*)

That's just the way I feel about it, Mr. Petrie. Isn't it wonderful! I didn't know any one else—(*earnestly*). Do you know, I'm going to tell you something that I couldn't say to my dearest friend if I had one. I have always thought that the gods intended people like you and me to be sort of—smelters.

Petrie

Smelters! Do you really prefer them to pegs, my dear Miss Prentiss? They sound fairly disagreeable.

Esther (*very effectively*)

When I was a little girl my father owned a mine. I remember the way the men used to pour the ore into the smelters, just as they found it—the rock and the dirt and the gold and the dross—everything together. The smelter would shake it about and in some way that I don't understand would reject all that was useless and bad and leave the pure gold, the shining gold, alone. Through us, don't you see, sweep the loves, the hates, the

envies, sympathies, the hypocrisies of other men and women. We smelt the gold out of it all.

Petrie

They kill our souls to fashion beautiful vessels out of them. That's better than yours, Miss Prentiss. Beautiful vessels from which they drink ecstasy and tears.

Esther

Yes, that *is* better than mine. (*Dreamily.*) Beautiful vessels from which they drink ecstasy and tears! It's wonderful! (*There is a pause. Then* ESTHER *bursts into sudden laughter, followed by* CROMWELL PETRIE.) That *was* utterly absurd of us, wasn't it?

Petrie

Yes, rather.

Esther

You're *awfully* good at that sort of thing, Mr. Petrie, and isn't it a relief not to have been taken seriously?

Petrie (*startled but amused*)

By Jove, it is! That's a strange thing.

Esther

What?

Petrie

Maddox was saying just that to me only a short while ago.

Esther

Was he really? How discerning of him! He must be a jewel.

Petrie (*doubtfully*)

I never thought of him as a jewel.

Esther (*springing up*)

Now, Mr. Petrie, I shall put my proposition before you because I feel quite sure, after what you said about beautiful vessels and all that rot—excuse me, but it *was* silly; you admitted it—that you are what I call one of "our kind," and that you will understand perfectly. I felt *almost* sure this morning on the beach when I saw you take a piece of tinfoil out of your cigarette box and admire it.

Petrie

It *is* beautiful stuff, tinfoil.

Esther (*enthusiastically*)

Isn't it! Then you covered a penny with it, smoothing it down very carefully with your thumb so that the pattern would show through. You took as much care in the business of turning a copper cent into a silver one as the other kind would take in mending a motor-car. It was that that gave me the courage to come here.

Petrie

Really, Miss Prentiss, how extraordinary! What is the plan?

Esther

Sit down and I'll put it before you.

(*He sits on the lounge. She perches on the arm of the lounge, facing him.*)

You see, people, real people, I mean, not our kind, make love to me.

Petrie

Of course.

Esther

And I like it rather, because it means so much to them. That's the devil of it. If I didn't like it it wouldn't matter.

Petrie

No, I don't suppose it could really bother one unless one liked it.

Esther

Exactly—these serious young men with nice eyes —Ah, how I dread them! Or, rather, how I dread myself, for they give me the cue to say such beautiful romantic things, and some day—(*tragically*) some day, I shall find that I have gone too far and that I am *married* to one of them! Caged,

bound, imprisoned for life! Oh, I must prevent that, I must.

Petrie

Would it necessarily mean——?

Esther

Of course it would. You know perfectly well that the only thing we care about, deep down in our hearts, the *only* thing is our work. We may play at making love and marrying and all that, but it doesn't really matter to us. Just now I've made a big success and I want to go on with it—naturally. I feel as a bird might who had just been allowed to use his wings. There are big unchartered realms to be discovered, and I am capable of spoiling it all for myself, knocking the whole thing down by saying to some one those things that I can say so well, and—and a girl who really meant them probably couldn't say at all! There's irony for you! The kind of girl who really means them generally can't say them at all.

Petrie

What things, for instance?

Esther

Well, like this—(*She does it tenderly, beautifully.*)

My career! What's that to me now? I give it gladly as an offering to thank God for the blessedness that you have brought to me. Oh, my dear, how I love you, how I love you— All my hopes, my ambitions seem cold and lifeless to me compared to the perfect sweetness of giving them up for you. Take me, not a great actress any more, only a woman whose mind, whose heart, whose soul, is yours to do with as you will—I ask nothing else of the world than this—you, now and always, and perhaps some day, a little baby who bears your name. Heaven could hold no more! That sort of thing—I wish I could find my handkerchief. Will you lend me yours? Thank you. (ESTHER PRENTISS *is crying. The tears are rolling down her cheeks.*) Don't you see how going on like that would spoil the whole damn thing—(*smiling*). The damn thing being my career?

Petrie

I do, decidedly. Is there any one in particular——?

Esther

No, indeed, no one at all, although there are lots of them about to whom it would sound perfectly appropriate, you know, should I say it.

Petrie

It's rather a pity not to. After all, most women seem to feel that marriage is the only true state of grace. And it would make him, whoever he happened to be, very happy. That's something. Isn't it?

Esther

Nonsense, Mr. Petrie, you know perfectly well I could never make any one happy—any more than you could. Many women have a strong talent for marriage, just as one might possess a talent for anything else. Of course they think marriage the best thing for all women. (*Proudly.*) I know enough not to put a halo around my inclinations, the way they do. I remember (*with studied effectiveness*) it was in Venice, when I was quite a little girl, that I first decided to be an actress. I bought a series of picture post-cards of Duse in "Citta Morta"—I don't know the story, except that she is blind, and the post-cards showed her groping her way fearfully through the bushes. She stumbles on the body of her sister. Even in those cheap pictures I could see the terrible chill dread of some near horror in her face. It was wonderful! I used to practice it in my bedroom

at the hotel. I did it very well, too, and I was happy—happier than I had ever been in my life before. I had found myself, you see. I don't choose to lose myself again. Here is your handkerchief. Such a nice fine one! I cried four tears in it.

Petrie

I shall value it for that above all other handkerchiefs.

Esther (*suddenly*)

Mr. Petrie, I came to ask you—I wondered whether *you* would be willing.

Petrie

Willing? Willing to do what?

Esther

To save me from them, the serious young men. I wondered whether you would—(*she hesitates and plunges in*) would marry me, Mr. Petrie.

(*There is a sensation;* Mr. Petrie *starts to speak.*)

(*Hurriedly.*) No; wait a minute; don't say anything yet.

Petrie

But I——

Esther

No, no; don't say a word, *wait*, please—(*there is*

a pause) of course you think me frightfully presuming, and I am, I suppose, but it would really be a great advantage to both of us, the kind of marriage I mean. You could say all sorts of clever, beautiful things that revealed the heights and depths of your nature, and I would be appreciative, but I never would expect them to mean anything, and you would save me from jumping into one of the pitfalls that yawn all about me. Don't you think it would be delightful and we would both be free, you know, quite free——

(CROMWELL PETRIE *looks at* ESTHER PRENTISS *reflectively. He looks away, then back at her again.*)

Petrie

How do you know that it would save you from the pitfalls? "The eternal triangle" is an amusing situation, you know. You might think it interesting to develop it in a new way, just as an artistic experiment.

Esther

Oh, no, I'm not at all afraid of that because I have a conscience— Oh, as big as that—and it was made in New England. Of course. I might conceivably say to one of them—"I love you, but

we must never see each other again. I wouldn't hurt dear Cromwell Petrie for the world," or something of that sort. You wouldn't object to that, would you?

Petrie

Not particularly, except that it sounds as if you ought to have said "dear *old* Cromwell Petrie."

Esther

Will you?

Petrie

My dear Miss Prentiss, I can think of no arrangement more inspired, more absolutely perfect than the one you suggest. But I'm afraid that it is only one of those sad, unhappy "might have beens." There are drawbacks— There is one particular drawback.

(*He takes* MRS. PETRIE'S *letter folded in the shape of a dachshund and balances it on his palm.*)

Esther (*enthusiastically*)

Oh, never mind, if *you* are willing. Throw the drawback overboard.

Petrie

That wouldn't be very gallant, would it, to throw her overboard. Poor drawback. She wouldn't un-

derstand: she would be quite bewildered. (*He looks ruefully at the dachshund.*)

Esther

She?

Petrie

I did it, the very thing you are dreading, a good many years ago. I let myself in for it and I couldn't get out. The victim of my own temperament, or say, rather, the victim of my own love of the appropriate phrase.

Esther

Do you mean to say that you are married?

Petrie

Yes. To a most estimable drawback. A Daughter of the Revolution, a Colonial Dame, a President of this and that, who dislikes me intensely.

Esther (*sinking down on the sofa*)

But you—you are so well known! How strange that I never——

Petrie (*slightly hurt*)

Haven't you seen the pictures in the papers? "Cromwell Petrie's house from the tennis-court," "Cromwell Petrie's tennis-court from the house," and so on—she's always in them.

Esther

Oh, I'm in despair! (*Effectively.*) Margaret Gautier's terrible cry, "Je ne veux pas mourir"—you know that cry—means for me "I don't want to marry," but I shall have to, just as Camille had to die. The fates are against me. They spoil everything.

Petrie

I'm sorry.

Esther (*indignantly*)

How did you get—roped in?

Petrie

She was a widow with a small child, Betty. One time we were sitting by a lake somewhere in the moonlight—ridiculous time for a child to be up—and Betty said to me before her mother, "Why does mother love you so much, Mr. Petrie?"

Esther

And what did you say?

Petrie

I lifted her on my knee, stroked her curls, and said, "Don't you remember, Betty dearest, the reason why the lamb loved Mary so?

"'Why does the lamb love Mary so?'
The eager children cry.

"'Cause Mary loves the lamb, you know,'
The teacher did reply."

Of course, that clinched it. It was irretrievable!

Esther (*laughing in spite of herself*)

How—delicious!

Petrie

They were manufactured curls, I found out afterward, too!

Esther

That does cheapen the whole thing awfully, doesn't it? (*She rises.*) Well, I've proposed to you and been refused! Mercy (*in horror*), whatever would my mother say to that—if I had a mother!

Petrie

Don't let's trouble to puzzle it out.

Esther

Good-by, Mr. Petrie, I shall leave Palm Beach, run away from them—perhaps to a farm, somewhere—I want to think of nothing but my work. Lose myself in it, immerse myself in it like a—a—what immerses itself?

Petrie (*thinking hard*)

A duck?

Esther

Oh, no; deeper than that—a *fish.* Immerse my-

self in it like a fish. Miller says that I may play Juliet next winter.

Petrie

I shall come to admire.

Maddox (*appearing*)

Did you ring, Mr. Petrie?

Petrie

No. Find Miss Prentiss a chair.

Esther

I should prefer to walk, really.

Maddox

There is one here, Miss Prentiss. I engaged it a few minutes ago, thinking that you might need it. (MADDOX *goes out.*)

Esther

He has such nice manners, that boy. I'm sure that there is a mystery about him. You will find out some day that he has a brother—an elder brother, who will die, and then Maddox will inherit the title.

Petrie

Let me see you to your chair.

Esther

Oh, no, thanks, don't trouble. (*She goes toward the door, then returns.*) Mr. Petrie, here is a gar-

denia to help you remember me. (*She takes it from her belt.*) Will you keep it—always!

Petrie

Forever—(*he puts it to his lips*) and when I look at it, I shall think—

"Of all sad words, of tongue or pen
The saddest are these——"

Esther (*reflectively*)

It might have *ben*. Yes, that's true—(*she laughs and takes his arm*) but, then, if we use a more cultured pronunciation—

Happy is he whose eyes were keen
Enough to avoid what might have *been*,

it seems just as wise. Nothing sounds as true, Mr. Petrie, as a falsehood, beautifully expressed.

Maddox (*at the door*)

There is a gentleman waiting for Miss Prentiss. (*Impressively.*) Captain Sir Arthur Poole-Carey, sir.

Esther

Captain Sir Arthur Poole-Carey. A pitfall! There is a pitfall waiting out there! (*She runs to* Mr. Petrie *as if for protection.*) Save me!

Petrie

Send him away.

Esther

Oh, yes, that's it—tell him to go away, Maddox.

Maddox

Yes, Miss Prentiss——

Esther

No, wait a minute. (*Pleadingly.*) Oh, he is so nice, Mr. Petrie, so tall and slender and serious, and he has such a dear little tiny mustache right there! He calls me "la Belle Dame Sans Merci" —La Belle Dame Sans Merci, who has found a soul. Isn't it sweet of him to think I am like that —I'm not a bit like that, really. (*She starts to go.*) I'll walk home with him.

Petrie (*warningly*)

Remember Juliet!

Esther (*she stops*)

Oh, yes—Juliet. Oh, bother Juliet! Don't look so solemn, you dear old thing. I'm "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" to-day. Just to-day.

"And then he closed her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four!"

(*She laughs and is off.*)

(CROMWELL PETRIE *balances a paper-cutter on one finger, thoughtfully.*)

Petrie (*calling*)

Maddox——

Maddox (*at the door*)

Yes, Mr. Petrie?

Petrie

Have you any brothers?

Maddox

Yes, Mr. Petrie, one, sir.

Petrie

Younger than you, I suppose——

Maddox

No, sir, older, fortunately for me.

Petrie

Why "fortunately for you"?

Maddox

Because he inherited, sir——

Petrie

Inherited! By Jove! She's right!

Maddox

Yes, sir. He inherited my father's plumbing business, sir. I shouldn't have made a good plumber. I'm too subtle, sir.

Petrie

A subtle plumber—*Good heavens!* Practical people, Maddox, they are the ones who count.

The kind of people who make steel rails, the kind of people who know what to do when one has overturned a cup of tea! (*He dashes the gardenia in the scrap-basket.*)

Maddox

True, sir.

Petrie (*furiously*)

True, how do you know that it is true! Nothing sounds as true as a falsehood, beautifully expressed. (*He smiles slowly.*) Huh, rather good, that! I must make use of it.

CURTAIN

POOR MADDALENA

CHARACTERS

PIERROT
PIERRETTE
BUMBU

Scene I. *The Land of Fantasy.*
Scene II. *The House of Maddalena.*
Scene III. *The Land of Fantasy.*

POOR MADDALENA

SCENE I

The land of fantasy, best shown by plain black curtains on which one can throw the colored pictures of one's mind. The curtains stretch, on either side, to a painted sky of deep blue. Against the sky, suspended by a silk cord, hangs a round, yellow moon. There is a pink door flat on the ground.

When the curtain rises on the land of fantasy PIERROT *and* PIERRETTE *are going through their eternal pantomime. He tells her that he loves her passionately, and points to his heart to prove it. She shows, with pretty, appropriate gestures, that she scorns his love.* PIERROT *sinks to his knees in despair. She takes pity on him and throws him a rose. He seizes it joyfully and pursues her. Just as he is about to catch her she stops suddenly, stretches out her arms, and yawns.*

Pierrette

Do you know, Pierrot, forgive me, but this love of yours is becoming rather tiresome.

Pierrot (*with a sigh*)

I must confess that it bores me a little too.

Pierrette

You see, we have done this so many times—the same rose, the same pursuit—but it never leads to anything. We just go through it again.

Pierrot

What else is there to do?

Pierrette (*her chin in her hands*)

I don't know—but I feel that there must be something.

Pierrot

If we hadn't gone over it often we wouldn't be able to perform it so beautifully. Your technic, Pierrette, is wonderful, and, if I may say so (*with pride*), *mine*——

Pierrette

Oh, of course. That's just it. We know how to show our love so prettily, so faultlessly, that sometimes I wonder whether we really love each other at all!

Pierrot (*pointing*)

I swear, by the round moon——

Pierrette (*contemptuously*)

Oh, the moon— (*In a whisper.*) Pierrot, I

have heard that in the world of men the moon is not always round!

Pierrot

Not round? Can it be square then? (*He laughs.*) That might be amusing.

Pierrette

I have heard that in the great world, down there (*she points to the pink door*) it grows smaller and smaller, and sometimes only half of it is there, as if it had been broken, and sometimes it goes away entirely and the sky is empty!

Pierrot

That would be awkward. How could I bring my lute and sing beneath your window if there were no moon? How could I shiver with cold if——

Pierrette

Oh, Pierrot, you don't know what cold is. You have never been really cold, and neither have I.

Pierrot

Pierrette, what a thing to say! I have but to shiver like this (*he shivers*)—now, see, I am cold. Brrr! It is one of my best effects.

Pierrette

You are only cold because you shiver, but men, I think, shiver because they are cold. That's the

great difference, Pierrot. It's all make-believe with us.

Pierrot

My dear Pierrette, it is more artistic to feel cold because one shivers than to shiver merely because one happens to be cold. That way has a certain crudity about it that is far from attractive. Really, I don't understand you to-night. Every gesture with which I show my adoration for you has been thought out to the smallest detail. I give you perfection. What more can you want?

Pierrette

I want to feel things, Pierrot. You and I show just the reflection of love, like a misshapen image in the water. I long to see it in reality, to hold it close. I want it to touch my heart and make it glad!

Pierrot

I've noticed that there was something, a subtle something, lacking in you lately. It is spoiling your art, this idea of yours.

Pierrette

Perhaps, but if we could feel love, just once, I think it might enrich our art. (*She kneels on the ground by the pink door.*) When I look at this

door, this door to the great world that has always been shut to us, I so long to open it. (*She tries to lift the door.*) Pierrot (*eagerly*), don't you think that we could get the key from Bumbu and go down there, you and I, for a little while?

Pierrot

Why should we do anything so unpleasant? Still— (*He hesitates.*) If, as you say, such an experience might help our art——

Pierrette

It would! It would!

(*There is the loud sound of a bass-drum.*)

Shsh! Here he comes, Bumbu! You *will* ask him for the key? You will?

Pierrot

Perhaps.

(BUMBU, *a big clown in yellow, carrying a bass-drum, appears at the back, against the sky.*)

Bumbu

Behold Bumbu, my children, spirit of grotesque! Bumbu! (*He beats the drum.*) Hear my drum. It shouts not of mediocrity but of exaggeration—not of comedy, but the comic—the comic! (*He beats the drum.*) A red grin on the face of a painted buffoon, gargoyles that leer beneath the

solemn spires of a church, the draggled finery of the very poor—natural things distorted! When the corners of men's mouths are twisted down in pain, my drum and I can jerk them up again to laughter—red and yellow laughter, splashed upon the gray monotony of life! I am Bumbu, spirit of grotesque, spirit of laughter. Without me would the world go mad. (*He beats the drum.*)

Pierrot

Oh, do be quiet, Bumbu. We know quite well who you are.

Bumbu (*putting down his drum*)

True, my children, but that is only because I have told you so often. If I did not, you might forget and think me the spirit of tragedy—for many do.

Pierrette

Bumbu, dear Bumbu, we want you to do something for us, don't we, Pierrot?

Pierrot

Pierrette has been begging me to ask you for the key to the door of the world.

Bumbu

What made you think of that, my children? Are you tired of your little game of love?

Pierrette

Oh, yes, we are so weary of it, aren't we, Pierrot, for it's always the same; you know that. Please, please open the door. Let us go down.

Bumbu

You are better here, my children, in the land of fantasy, for here there is no sorrow and no joy. Here the lights are dim and shadows have lost their terror. Down there in the mad world you would be jostled and pushed about. The air is thick with flying stones of misfortune. You might be hit by them, crushed, frightened. You couldn't be happy as you are here, dreaming with Pierrot, among the roses, under a painted moon.

Pierrot

Stay here, Pierrette. I don't want to go down.

Pierrette

And joy—is there no joy there, Bumbu, where love is real?

Bumbu

There is great joy, but it comes too close, sometimes, and burns.

Pierrot

Stay here, Pierrette.

Pierrette

I want to go. Let me go.

Pierrot

Pierrette, stay here. (*He strikes a chord on his lute.*) Come, dance with me.

Pierrette

No, no. (*She sinks to the ground and buries her face in her knees. Then she holds out her hand.*) Look, Bumbu, what is this? It fell from my eyes!

Pierrot

Show it to me. How wonderful! See what Pierrette has found, Bumbu, this sparkling thing, like a diamond. What can it be?

Bumbu

That, my children, is a tear.

Pierrot

A tear! I've never seen a tear before.

Bumbu

There are many in the great world, but in the land of fantasy, Pierrette, there should be no tears.

Pierrette

I love my tear. It's so beautiful! Lovely colors are trembling in it, all the colors of light.

Bumbu

That light, reflected from the tears of men, you and Pierrot have been using to weave into dance or song.

Pierrot

The key! Give me the key, Bumbu. I, too, would go down into the world of tears, for tears are exquisite!

(BUMBU *produces a huge key from his belt and hands it to* PIERROT.)

Bumbu

Here it is, my children. Open the door if you must. I shall be waiting for you here, I, Bumbu, spirit of mockery.

Pierrette

Quick, Pierrot, open it!

Pierrot (*struggling with the lock*)

It doesn't fit.

Pierrette (*eagerly*)

Oh, yes; it fits. It must, doesn't it, Bumbu? Here, let me try. (*She takes the key.*) Oh, I can't turn it.

Pierrot

Give it to me. It works hard.

Bumbu

So does everything that has to do with the great world.

(PIERROT *struggles with the lock.*)

Pierrette

You have given us the wrong key.

Bumbu

No, that is the key. You will open it after a while.

Pierrot (*excitedly*)

It's turning!

Pierrette

Let me help.

Pierrot

No, I can do it. There! (*He turns the key and lifts the door. A strong light shines through the opening.* PIERROT *kneels beside it and looks down.*)

Pierrette (*her hands over her eyes*)

Oh, it's blinding, that white light!

Bumbu

You will get used to it.

Pierrette

What do you see, Pierrot?

Pierrot

I see a great heap of gold, mountain-high. Men are crawling over it, clutching it, and slipping

down. At its base there is a dark crowd of people, scrambling, fighting one another, but near the top there are not so many. They climb more easily. I see a temple with shadowy columns reaching to the sky, but it is empty—no, not quite. Just then I saw a man leave the temple and join the others at the mountain of gold. And look—there goes another. He is running—and another! Yes, but there are still men left in the temple. I can see them now. Listen, they are singing. Oh, what music! Do you hear?

Pierrette

Why, Pierrot, I don't see that at all. There are lights and flowers and girls dancing. They seem to have little wings on their feet, but the feathers keep dropping from the wings all the time. The air is white with them. When the feathers have gone, they don't dance any more. See, there is one who is trying to gather the feathers and put them back on her wings, but she can't do it. She is crying. And that girl took hers off and threw them away. Why did she do it? What a pity!

Pierrot

Pierrette, how absurd you are. I see only a

mountain of gold and a shadowy temple, and music. Surely you hear the music.

Pierrette (*slowly*)

Yes, I hear singing, too. It streams out like a silver banner in the wind—but—listen—it stops too soon and changes to something quite different.

Pierrot

Let us go down. I'll take my lute.

Pierrette

And I my tear. Good-by, Bumbu, good-by, foolish painted land of fantasy.

Pierrot

Good-by, round pasteboard moon.

Pierrette

Pierrot and I are going to find life; we are going to find love where things are real!

(*They disappear.* BUMBU *sits beside the open door and watches them. He beats his drum once softly and laughs.*)

Bumbu

Bumbu, spirit of grotesque, Bumbu! (*Then he leans his head on his drum and stays there, waiting.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

A man's voice is heard singing "O Sole Mio." The curtains part, showing a bare little room in Italy, opening on a small balcony. There are a few chairs in the room, and a table on which is a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine. PIERRETTE, *now* MADDALENA, *an Italian peasant girl, stands leaning against the balcony, listening to the voice, still singing in the street. She listens in a sort of ecstasy, dancing a little by herself until the song breaks off abruptly. A girl's laugh rings out from below.* MADDALENA *leans over the balcony and calls happily, "Paolo." She starts back again in sudden anger and runs to the door. She calls again, in quite a different way, "Paolo."*

PAOLO *enters lazily, still humming, with his guitar, and lounges against the door. He is* PIERROT, *in the corduroy trousers and red sash worn by the peasants of Italy.*

Maddalena (*hotly*)

I saw you kiss her, when you had finished your

song—that girl down there leaning against the wall—I saw you!

Paolo (*tightening the strings of his guitar*)

Why not? Her lips were soft.

Maddalena

And are my lips not enough for you? (*She beats her mouth with her hand.*) Mine?

Paolo

Enough? Yes. Still I don't mind taking a little extra when it comes my way. She thanked me for the song. (*He laughs.*) Come, let me try yours now to see which are the sweeter.

Maddalena (*fiercely*)

No. (*She stamps her foot.*) You were singing to *me.*

Paolo

To you and to all girls who are slim and have fire in them like you.

Maddalena

Do you think *I* would do that—let other men—Oh!

Paolo

And Pasquale—has he never succeeded in buying even a kiss with all his money? "Marry me,

Maddalena," I've heard him whine at you, "I'll make you rich." (*He laughs.*) Old Pasquale.

Maddalena (*passionately*)

When I have had the gold of your love, could I value the other kind that can be put in bags and thrown on the table?

Paolo (*shrugging his shoulders*)

Let that be as you please. But I can tell you, the kind that comes in bags is not to be despised. (*He takes the handkerchief from around his neck and wipes his forehead.*) Whew! It was hot, down there in the sun.

Maddalena

I hate you sometimes!

Paolo (*taking up his guitar*)

Very well. I'll go then. Good-by.

(*She runs to him.*)

Maddalena

No, no, please don't go, Paolo. Please, please don't go. (*She holds him by the arm.*) Forgive me. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. You know I didn't mean it!

Paolo

Oh, well——

Maddalena

It's because I love you so, Paolo. (*She covers her heart with her hands.*) I love you, I love you!

Paolo (*patting her shoulder*)

Funny little Maddalena.

Maddalena

You'll stay?

Paolo

Of course. I came to see you. Pour me a glass of wine.

Maddalena (*bringing the wine and sitting at his feet*)

There is something in your singing that tears a girl's heart in two. How can I blame them if they —if they— But *me*, Paolo, you must do more than kiss—me you must *love*. You do love me?

Paolo

I've told you so many times.

Maddalena

Tell me again.

Paolo (*holding her by the chin and looking into her eyes*)

I love you, Maddalena. There, will that do? (*He hands her his empty wine-glass.*)

Maddalena

Your voice, it's so wonderful! It makes me think of the light shining through the blue glass in the church. It always makes me want something, oh, so badly.

Paolo

What, Maddalena? Tell me?

Maddalena

I don't know, but I think it's—I think I long to kill myself for you, to sacrifice myself, to pour myself out at your feet! (*He laughs and plays with her scarf.*) I didn't want to love you like this. I felt afraid. But my heart was like a tight little bud of a flower at the first touch of the hot sun. Its petals all relaxed and fell apart. Now they are open, Paolo, and dropping, and you may crush me, if you like. You may crush me!

Paolo (*half laughing, and seizing her by the shoulders*)

Perhaps I will.

Maddalena

I want you to.

Paolo

And leave nothing for Pasquale?

Maddalena

Pasquale! Don't speak to me of him! (*A pause.*)

Do you remember that day among the olive-trees, you and I, all the hot afternoon, and that night on the hill, under the stars, when you—cried for joy of me? I could see the tears on your cheeks. Oh, Maria, I thought I should die then of happiness!

Paolo

Maddalena, that was beautiful, my Maddalena.

Maddalena (*opening a locket that hangs about her neck*)

And my jewel, how it shone that night. It seemed to shoot a thousand colors, like fire.

Paolo

Let me see it again. (*He looks at it.*) It's so strange, your having this, a poor girl like you. I wonder where it came from.

Maddalena

I don't know. I've always had it. I wish I knew.

Paolo

It must be worth a great deal of money.

Maddalena (*taking it back quickly*)

I shall never sell it; I couldn't.

Paolo (*lighting a cigarette*)

No, I suppose not.

Maddalena (*eagerly*)

Paolo, listen. Let's go to the house of the

Padre and arrange to have him—to have him marry us soon. He's there; I know he's there. I saw him go down the hill an hour ago on his donkey, with a basket of grapes. Paolo, please.

Paolo (*pushing her hands*)

Maddalena, I came to talk to you sensibly.

Maddalena (*chilled*)

Sensibly?

Paolo

Yes, sensibly. Christo mio, must we always be love-making? Maddalena, I have had a great piece of good luck.

Maddalena

Good luck?

Paolo

Yes, for me. (*Excitedly.*) Maddalena, there is an American lady staying at the hotel. She heard me sing one night in the gardens there by the gate. She knows, yes, she *knows* what I have here. (*He points to his throat.*) It's not always to be wasted on these simpletons, these knownothings who hang about this village. It's for the world!

Maddalena (*in sudden terror*)

Paolo, what do you mean?

Paolo

She called me into the hotel. There were other

people there, rich people all in grand clothes. Psh, what did I care for that? I'll be the equal of them all soon and more, for I have a fortune in my throat. That's what she said—a fortune in my throat! (*He speaks quickly, in intense excitement.*) Maddalena, she's going to send me to Milano—oh, she needn't fear, I'll give her back the money—I'll study there—I don't need much study, it's true—and in a few years you'll see, posted in big head-lines, "Rubini, Paolo Rubini, the greatest tenor in Italy, the greatest in the world." (*He laughs exultantly.*)

(MADDALENA *is silent, her face in her hands.*) Well, what is the matter?

Maddalena (*in a low voice*)

Paolo, don't go. Stay here with me.

Paolo

Stay here, wasting myself among a lot of fools who don't know an artist from a mountebank? You're mad!

Maddalena

I know—what you are—*I* know.

Paolo

And this is the way that you take it—you who have said that you loved me!

Maddalena

But you'd be happy, Paolo. Think what it would mean. You and I—to be together, to love each other always—here, where life is beautiful and simple and quiet. Oh, what can you want more than happiness?

Paolo

Yes, I'd be happy, there is no doubt of that, as a pig is happy—but what does that matter. (*Fiercely.*) Don't you understand? I have something in me that must come out or die. Do you think I'm going to throw it away, waste it, for the sake of happiness?

Maddalena

No, that was foolish of me. I do understand, I do; of course you must go; only—(*her voice chokes with tears*) take me with you. I'll help you so much. Indeed I will. I'll do anything. Take me, too.

Paolo

Maddalena, that's impossible. I'd like to have you, of course, but what could I do with you? You would be in the way. I mustn't let anything hold me back, don't you see? I'm going to rise

like the sun! There's a good girl. You stay here and marry Pasquale.

Maddalena (*frantically*)

Oh, you don't know what you are saying to me. I shall die. I can't live without you. No, no, no, no, no! You can't leave me like this. You can't!

Paolo

Don't you see how absurd you are? To-morrow, when I have gone, you will be sorry that you behaved in this way. I can't do anything that would spoil my chance of success. You have no right to ask me that.

Maddalena

I wouldn't spoil it. You needn't pay any attention to me. It wouldn't matter. Listen—I could cook things for you, the things you like.

Paolo

There will be plenty of people to do that.

Maddalena

Oh, you are killing me! You are sticking knives into my heart! (*She sinks to her knees and clutches his feet.*) Don't leave me behind. Don't make everything black and hopeless like this. Don't, don't, don't!

(*He tries to free himself from her.*)

Paolo (*impatiently*)

Maddalena, let me go . . . you little idiot! (*He wrenches himself from her grasp.*)

(*She lies motionless, sobbing wildly.*)

Paolo (*at the door*)

I'm sorry. (*He hesitates.*) Good-by.

Maddalena

No, no—wait. (*She sits up.*) I must say something to you.

Paolo

Well, what is it?

Maddalena (*trying to control herself*)

In a minute——

Paolo

Maddalena, I haven't much time. There is much to do.

Maddalena

I'm trying not to cry. I know you don't like to see me cry. Paolo, you are quite right. You couldn't take me. I'd be—ridiculous among the people who are going to be your friends when you are a great singer. I know it now.

(*He kneels beside her and pats her shoulder.*)

Paolo

Indeed you wouldn't. You are better than all

the rest of them put together. Huh, they're not much.

Maddalena

And the American lady—she wouldn't like it if I went too.

Paolo

Well, no, she wouldn't, Maddalena. You see——

Maddalena

Yes, I see.

Paolo

It isn't as if I loved her as much as I love you. I could never care for any one else like that.

Maddalena

You will love her more because she will give you more—fame, wealth—your opportunity, while I could only give you love. All that there is, all that there ever was in love I gave you, but love could never satisfy you, Paolo. It isn't enough. Paolo (*she gives him the locket from about her neck*), take this. I want to give it to you, and sometimes it will make you think of all the beauty we have seen together.

Paolo

No, Maddalena.

Maddalena

Yes, please, you must.

(*He takes it.*)

Paolo (*looking at her*)

What are you going to do?

Maddalena (*slowly*)

What am I going to do? I don't know. Marry Pasquale, perhaps, after a while. One gets pushed into things and there is no use in trying to resist. And now, good-by. When you go, when you are down there in the street, will you sing to me?

Paolo

Yes, Maddalena, you've been so wonderful. I won't forget you.

Maddalena

Forget me? (*She laughs a little.*) Oh, yes, you might as well.

(*He goes out. She doesn't move. Presently* PAOLO'S *voice can be heard singing "O Sole Mio." She listens a minute with closed eyes, then flings herself down, sobbing over and over again, "Paolo, Paolo!"*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE III

The curtain rises again on the land of fantasy. PIERROT *is just climbing out of the door on the ground.* BUMBU *helps him.*

PIERROT

That was very interesting. (*He glances around.*) Where is Pierrette?

Bumbu (*looking down*)

She is coming.

(PIERRETTE'S *voice calls, "Help me, Bumbu." She appears. They lift her up.*)

Pierrette

What a climb! It's quite exhausting. Oh, Bumbu, I'm so glad to see you again. (*She stretches out her hands.*) And Pierrot!

Pierrot

Pierrette! I treated you very badly, you know. How could I have treated you like that?

Pierrette (*shrugging her shoulders*)

Oh, well, it's the way of men. How lovely it is here, how peaceful. And the roses! Bumbu, I had forgotten that in the land of fantasy the roses have no thorns.

Pierrot

And no perfume!

Pierrette

What does that matter! Bumbu, how long have we been away?

Bumbu

It's impossible to tell, for here, where we are, there is no time.

Pierrette

I think it has been many years. Years, do you know what they are? They are the spokes of a great relentless wheel that carries one up, up, up, up, up—then, just as slowly, just as surely, it brings one down, down to the mud again. Time stole all the treasures of my soul. It sucked dry the wine of my body. I grew old and wrinkled. My hair was thin, and I shuffled when I walked! Oh! (*She shudders.*) And yet, somehow, I never knew or realized what it had done to me. A warm fire, a sugared cake could, at the end, make me whimper with delight. (*She turns suddenly and points to* BUMBU, *fiercely.*) It's you, Bumbu, spirit of grotesque, who feed the old those little petty joys to make them forget what they have lost!

Bumbu

Yes, it's I, Bumbu! My little penny whistles amuse them for a time when the shouts and tumult of the world sound far away.

Pierrot

Maddalena! She was always young in Paolo's memory! Sometimes he thought that he would go back to her—but he never did. (*He sighs.*) Poor Maddalena!

Bumbu

Poor Maddalena!

Pierrette

Poor Maddalena! (*She shrugs her shoulders.*) Oh, well, she had her memories.

Pierrot

Some of them were bitter.

Pierrette

Yes. But when she married Pasquale, do you think she could have been content with him, if she hadn't known love—before? That's what saved her and (*she laughs*) that's what saved Pasquale as well. Tell me, what did Paolo do with Maddalena's jewel, the tear—for that's what it was?

Pierrot

He kept it for a long while, then it seemed beautiful no longer. Its brilliance faded and—somewhere—he lost it.

Pierrette

It's just as well.

Bumbu

Was he happy—Paolo?

Pierrot

Happy? No, only at first. His great triumphs were never enough. He wanted more, and after a time he ruined himself, and, what is worse—he ruined his voice.

Bumbu

And now, my children, I'll shut the door again. (*He pauses.*) Will you have one last look?

Pierrette

No, no!

Pierrot

Never.

(BUMBU *locks the door.*)

Pierrette

Poor things, down there—little half beings all of them, searching for completeness, for one glimpse of perfection.

Pierrot

Love brings that to them—to a few.

Pierrette

Yes, it does. That's why they crave it, but down in the great world love hurts! Oh, how can it hurt them like that, fill them like that, so overpoweringly, then pass so quickly away?

Pierrot

Because it's of no importance, I assure you.

Pierrette (*with conviction*)

Oh, yes, indeed it is.

Pierrot

When it's born in the imagination and is as unreal as a dream?

Pierrette

That's true, but it can be the only thing that matters—while it lasts.

Pierrot

Paolo loved fifty times.

Pierrette

Maddalena loved only once.

Pierrot

Poor Maddalena!

Pierrette

She had quite enough of it, thank you. To love

once, Pierrot, is fifty times better than loving fifty times. That must have been a great nuisance!

Pierrot

It was, when it interfered with his art. Still, I can't deny that at times it seemed well worth even that.

Bumbu

Only at times, I'll warrant you, and never for long. Those foolish mortals who spend their time chasing bright bubbles, sure to burst. Only art, my children, accomplishment, can lead them to discover riches that may be stored away, one by one, until they grow to treasure indestructible. If they but knew.

Pierrot (*gaily*)

Still, the pantomime of love, you'll admit, is enchanting. (*He points to his heart, then to* PIERRETTE.)

Pierrette

And that of disdain. (*She shows her scorn of* PIERROT *by pantomime.*)

Pierrot (*while dancing, as in the beginning*)

All reflections, all images of things are lovelier than the things themselves. Do you agree with me, Pierrette?

Pierrette (*also dancing*)

Far more exquisite, more delicate. I quite agree, Pierrot.

Pierrot

You are adorable, Pierrette.

Pierrette

Pierrot, you are charming. Do you love me?

Pierrot (*on his knees*)

I swear by the moon——

(PIERRETTE *runs and pulls down the moon, on its silken cord, from the sky.*)

Pierrette

Our delightful moon, that never shrinks, that always remains so beautifully round! (*She tosses it to him.*)

(*He throws it back.* BUMBU *beats his drum.*)

Bumbu

Play, my children, play. Mortals cry for the moon, but we, in the land of fantasy, need only laugh. The moon is ours!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SEE-SAW

CHARACTERS

Henry Crocker
Marjory Crocker
Jack Maynard
Aline Maynard

SEE-SAW

A garden in the moonlight. There is a faint sound of dance music. MARJORY *and* HENRY CROCKER *come down the wide, shallow steps from a terrace on the left.*

HENRY CROCKER *is a florid, middle-aged man with mustachios and protuberant eyes. His wife is the kind of woman that a successful man of* HENRY CROCKER'S *temperament who married late in life, when he could have the best of everything, would choose.*

Henry

You don't want to dance any more, do you? Let's go home. I ordered the car at two.

Marjory

In a minute. It's lovely here. (*She hums with the music and dances a little.*) Oh, why is dance music so sad, do you suppose? Perhaps it is because it is too gay. We can never be as gay as that, not really. It gives us glimpses of a world where nothing matters. And, of course, things do matter, don't they, Henry?

Henry

Get up from that stone bench. You'll catch cold.

Marjory

Shall I? But it's meant to sit on, isn't it? I suppose that countless people have sat on it to-night. Are they all catching cold, do you think? Is that heavenly music being punctuated by sneezes? How awful! Give me my cloak. (*She spreads it on the bench.*) Come, sit down. It's quite all right now. (*She lights a cigarette.*)

Henry

You smoke too much.

Marjory

Henry, darling, I love this tender solicitude for my welfare. It makes me think that you want me to live to be an old, old woman. It's so good of you. It's so awfully good of you! (*She takes his hand and strokes her cheek with it.*) Do you like to stroke my cheek, Henry? Is it soft?

Henry

Let's go home. I have a director's meeting in the morning. I can't stand these late affairs any more. They're tiresome.

Marjory (*still holding his hand to her cheek*)

And the directors' meetings, are they never tiresome?

Henry

Well, if they are, they're mighty profitable, anyway, which this sort of thing isn't.

Marjory

Just a little while longer, please. Just until this dance is over. See, we have it all to ourselves, the moonlight and the stars and the Japanese lanterns and the little crickets in the grass, and the unhealthy stone bench. (*She sighs.*) It's nice, isn't it? (*Shaking his hand in exasperation.*) Henry, you *must* think it's nice! Oh, bother, here come some people!

(*Enter* JACK *and* ALINE MAYNARD.)

Aline

Come along home, Jack. It's awfully late. I'm beginning to hate dances. They bore me to tears!

Jack

Isn't this a jolly garden! I wish we had discovered this before.

Aline

You don't seem to realize that I have to meet

the ten-o'clock train to-morrow. Aunt Kate is coming.

Jack

Let me have just one cigarette out here. Then I'll go. Come, sit down on the grass with me.

Aline

If you think I'm going to sit on wet grass at this time of night you are much mistaken. You oughtn't to do it either.

Jack

It isn't wet.

Aline

Jack, I wish you wouldn't smoke so many cigarettes. It's perfectly awful, just one right after the other!

Marjory

I'm ready now. (*She gets up and passes* JACK *on her way to the steps.*)

Jack (*rising*)

How do you do, Mrs. Crocker?

Marjory

Oh, how do you do! (*She nods to him and goes on.*)

Henry

Wait a minute. You forgot your cloak. (*He goes back for it.*)

Marjory (*to* JACK)

I suppose that you have already been told that it's a beautiful night.

Jack

Yes, isn't it wonderful! The garden was a surprise. We didn't expect to find it here, so far from the house.

Marjory

It's much prettier than the big one. Don't you think so?

Jack

Are you staying here?

Marjory

No, at Southampton. We motored down for the dance. We are just starting back.

Henry (*returning with the cloak over his arm*)

Here you are, Marge. I thought I'd better hunt around a bit to see if you had left anything else. What on earth would you do if you didn't have some one to pick things up for you?

Marjory

Mr. Maynard, I don't think that you know my husband. (*To* HENRY.) Mr. Maynard and I

met at Bar Harbor that summer when you were in Europe. Three years ago, wasn't it?

Jack

I think so. My wife, Mrs. Crocker. Aline—Mr. Crocker.

Aline

My husband and Mrs. Crocker seem to have met before and I feel that I know you a little, too. Every one knows the great Mr. Henry Crocker.

Henry (*flattered*)

I'm afraid that you see very little good of me in the newspapers. I'm sadly maligned.

Aline (*enthusiastically*)

Oh, no, Mr. Crocker. Only the other day I was reading about your wonderful collections. The article said you owned more original old masters than any one man in America, and your seventeenth-century snuff-boxes! So few American business men are really interested in art. It's such a pity!

Henry

Well, I flatter myself that I have put together a little museum that would compare favorably with any in Europe.

Aline

Isn't that splendid, Jack! How do you find time for it with all your other interests?

Henry

Oh, I keep a man on the other side who does nothing but look around for me and pick up things here and there. It's small, I admit it's small, as yet—but I will have nothing in it that is not of value and interest. I'd like to show it to you.

Aline

Oh, thank you so much!

Henry

Would you care to dance this?

Aline

Yes, I'd love to. Will you wait here for me, Jack?

Jack

We ought to go. You said that you were tired.

Aline

Oh, that doesn't matter. It isn't often that one has an opportunity to dance with Mr. Henry Crocker.

(*They go off, toward the house.*)

And have you any Rembrandts, real ones? I adore Rembrandts!

Marjory (*after they have gone*)

I'm sorry. It seems this was inevitable.

Jack

Do you want to dance?

Marjory

Not particularly. (*She throws her cloak on the grass, and they sit on the stone bench.*) If only she hadn't mentioned Henry's seventeenth-century snuff-boxes! That won his heart.

(*There is a pause.*)

Jack

Years afterward they met in a garden.

Marjory

It sounds quite like de Maupassant, doesn't it?

Jack

How have you been, Marjory?

Marjory

How have I been? Very well—thank you. If I had not I shouldn't tell you about it. It's not interesting. I heard that you had married. She is lovely.

Jack

Yes. We are very happy.

Marjory

I'm glad of that. Happiness is so rare, isn't it?

(*She looks him over.*) Marriage agrees with you. You are getting plump. Don't be too plump, Jack, or you will lose that charm that every one used to speak about.

Jack

You seem different, somehow.

Marjory

Well—(*she laughs*) that's hardly surprising.

Jack

What have you been doing?

Marjory

Oh, the usual things—Europe—town in winter —Henry's art collections.

Jack

I meant to say, what have you been thinking?

Marjory (*after a pause*)

At first I thought that—under the circumstances—it might have been a little kinder if it had occurred to you to tell me about her. It would have saved me from making a fool of myself.

Jack

Don't say that. You didn't make a fool of yourself.

Marjory

Indeed I did. That letter! That awful letter! I try to forget about it, but even now it comes creeping into my consciousness and fills me with horror! It seems unbelievable that I could have written it. It disgusted you, didn't it?

Jack

No.

Marjory

You never answered it. Oh, tell the truth. It disgusted you.

Jack

Well—a little.

Marjory

Of course. It was so abject.

Jack

Why did you do it? You always seemed so serene, so calm, so unattainable.

Marjory

Yes, ordinarily I have a fair amount of common sense—that's what you mean by those adjectives, of course. But a person like me so easily topples over into emotionalism, and I toppled—goodness, didn't I topple!

Jack

It was queer.

Marjory

Oh, I don't know. You see, as long as you wanted me I kept my head, but when you seemed to grow a little weary, it baffled me. I didn't understand. I had no children. Henry was happy with his snuff-boxes. I thought I loved you, so I threw myself at your feet—always an unbecoming position for a woman to be in, at a man's feet. However, even the thought that one has made a fool of oneself has its uses. It saves one from toppling again. This dance won't last long, I hope. Henry was right about the bench. It's cold.

Jack

When I wanted you, you kept your head. When I kept mine, you lost yours. That's the way it would always have been with us. It was a sort of see-saw. Because I was down, you stayed up. As I sailed up, you came down.

Marjory

Yes. See-saw, Marjory Daw. Jack shall have a new—it wouldn't, I suppose, be either appropriate or nice to feminize the next word.

Jack

You didn't used to be so bitter.

Marjory

Bitter? No, I was sweet, you said. Intolerably sweet, wasn't that it? How funny!

Jack

We should have been like the figures on the Grecian urn. I ought never to have caught you. Only in that way forever would I have loved and you be fair.

Marjory

What a charming idea!

Jack

For a time, I confess, you spoiled me for other women. There were such amazing depths to you, such light and shade. You were so unexpected.

Marjory

Yes, wasn't I? I'm glad you had sense enough to see that.

Jack

I saw it.

Marjory

If you did, which I doubt, I wonder, in quite an impersonal way, why I didn't hold you. I always thought that if ever I met a man with whom I could be myself that— Oh, well, what's the use of going into it? Will you light a cigarette for me?

(*He lights it and gives it to her.*)

Jack

"But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! The night is thine.
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire——"

Do you remember? You were that to me—for a long time.

Marjory

A long time! (*She laughs.*) It was only three years ago.

Jack

For about a month. That's a long time.

Marjory

How many of us are there?

Jack

What do you mean?

Marjory

How many Cynaras? I never thought for a minute that I would be your only memory.

Jack

You are the last one.

Marjory

That's comforting.

Jack

Marjory!

Marjory

Do you know what I wanted to be to you, way back in the beginning? I hoped that, afterward, whenever you talked with another woman you would say to yourself, "In her presence there was more"—that whenever you—kissed another woman you would think, "In her kisses there was more." Oh, you were a wonderful lover, Jack. "Burning Sappho" herself would have rejoiced in you! Sometimes I wanted to plunge a knife into your heart, deep, deep in, so that you would never give any one else what you gave to me. (*She gets up.*) That was scarcely generous, was it?

Jack

I cared for you a great deal more than you gave me credit for.

Marjory

Credit? (*she laughs*). My dear Jack!

Jack

And now that it's all over, it would have been a wonderful thing to think about if——

Marjory

Yes, *if*—oh, why can't things ever be perfect in

this world? If only I hadn't toppled! If only you had not been so crude, cut me away from you with a meat axe, as it were! We were neither of us true to type. That's what I mind, more than anything.

Jack

I thought that was the best way to end it.

Marjory

It wasn't. If you had told me the truth—if I had understood—my attitude would have been so beautiful! Sad—but beautiful. I can see myself bidding you good-by with a brave, teary smile. As it was—oh, well—(*she shrugs her shoulders*). If I had to come down in my own estimation, I'm glad, on the whole, that you came down in it, too. To have had to look up to you might have been even more humiliating.

Jack

We know each other now, at any rate.

(*She leans over the bench.*)

Marjory

Do we? You never knew me, Jack. You never will, and thank goodness, it doesn't hurt me at all to think that you don't care to.

Jack

Good heavens, how dead it all seems! Who would have thought that a thing so vital, so beautiful, could end like this!

Marjory

It's only the really vital things that die completely. Nothing can be more alive than fire, nothing can be deader when it's out. We are sifting the soft gray ashes of it now. They're all that is left.

Jack

Ashes of roses.

Marjory

Ashes of roses! You always did say such pretty things! (*A long pause.*) Before we part forever, may I ask you one question?

Jack

Yes. Anything.

Marjory

Are you ever going to grow a beard, a pointed, black, curly one?

Jack

Heaven forbid! Why?

Marjory

Oh, I don't know. It might suit your jaunty

manner—the sort of Svengali-ish kind— (*She listens.*) The music has stopped.

Jack

It stopped long ago.

Marjory

Shall I give you a "good-by" now, and the wistful, teary smile? (*She turns away and picks up her cloak.*) No, it's too late. It wouldn't be effective.

(ALINE MAYNARD *and* HENRY CROCKER *come back.*)

Henry

Well, well, here you are, just as we left you!

Aline

Didn't you dance?

Jack

No.

Marjory

It's so much nicer out here.

Aline

Mr. Crocker has been telling me how hard it is to tell real objets d'art from the imitations. People are so unscrupulous about selling them to him and some of them are very beautiful, but, of course, they are only imitations, so they wouldn't do.

Henry (*pedantically*)

Yes, that's what makes the life of a collector interesting, Mr. Maynard. It's a game, and, as in all games, you have to keep on the lookout. It's great sport to see that the other fellow doesn't get the better of you.

Aline

And how much finer it is, isn't it, Mrs. Crocker, to have a hobby like that—collecting those lovely things—than to spend one's life in golfing or hunting the way most Americans do!

Henry

I make it a rule never to buy a picture by a living artist. It is only after a man is dead that one can tell his real value.

Aline

How true! I never thought of that.

Marjory

This rule of Henry's sounds as if it might be rather hard on the living artists, Mrs. Maynard, but it isn't really. They wouldn't, I'm sure, want to have their pictures shut up in my husband's museum.

Aline

I do hope that you and Mr. Crocker will dine

with us soon. Our house is near here, on the beach.

Marjory

Thank you. I'm sorry. We sail for Egypt next Saturday.

Aline

Egypt! Oh, I *envy* you!

Jack

Where is your wrap, Aline?

Aline

I left it in the house. We shall have to go out that way. Good night. I hope that you bring back a great many wonderful treasures from Egypt, so that we poor Americans, who have to stay at home, may enjoy them.

Henry (*cheerfully*)

That's what I'm going for. They mustn't keep all the good things over there.

The Maynards

Good night.

The Crockers

Good night.

(THE MAYNARDS *mount the steps of the terrace and disappear.*)

Henry

Charming girl, that Mrs. Maynard, so intelligent.

Marjory

Yes, isn't she?

Henry

I don't remember hearing you mention him.

Marjory

I didn't mention him because I thought I was in love with him. One doesn't to one's husband. It's a tradition.

Henry

What!

Marjory

Yes, really. Dear old Henry, I almost threw you over for him.

Henry

That would have been foolish of you.

Marjory

I should think so. Thank heaven he saved me from it. He's like a meringue, all fluffy on top, with nothing underneath.

Henry

You'd fall for any one who played up to you.

Marjory

No, I wouldn't. What did you say that for?

Henry

Well, anyway, you need me to keep you straight.

Marjory

That's true. Keep me straight, Henry. Please keep me straight.

Henry

I mean to.

Marjory (*almost in tears*)

Poor Henry, I'm afraid I'm the poorest thing in your collection.

Henry (*patting her shoulder*)

Now don't get dramatic, Marge. You're all right.

Marjory

And you keep nothing that isn't of value and interest. Remember—you said that. It sets me up.

Henry

Come along. The car's waiting.

(*They start to go.*)

Marjory

You're such a steady old thing, Henry. I adore you. Beware of see-saws! That should be written on the title-page of "What a Young Woman Ought to Know."

CURTAIN

KING AND COMMONER

CHARACTERS

Lord Edijio
Maria
Tomasso
Daniello
Grimand
The Queen
Lady Emilia
Heralds, etc.

KING AND COMMONER

TO BE PLAYED OUT OF DOORS

A clearing in the forest. At the right stands a little brown hut out of whose chimney the smoke is curling. There is silence. Presently, in the distance, can be heard the faint sound of a horn, then the crackling of underbrush as a horseman, seen dimly at first through the trees, approaches. He circles his way carefully through the thick woods until he reaches the clearing, when he dashes to the hut and, leaning from his horse, pounds on the door.

Edijio

Open! Open, in the name of the queen!

(MARIA, *an old woman, opens the door and peers around it.*)

Maria

Lawks! You'll bring the house down. One knock is enough to summon a sociable woman like me who is always glad to welcome a passing stranger. Open! Open! In whose name, did you say?

Edijio

In the name of the queen!

Maria

The queen! Have mercy upon us, the queen! (*Shrewdly.*) What can the queen want with a poor woman who lives peaceable in the forest with her two boys?

Edijio

You know well enough, my good woman. She has come to claim her son.

Maria (*wringing her hands*)

Her son! Oh, la, la! Have mercy upon us! Have mercy upon us! What shall I do?

Edijio

What! You haven't lost him?

Maria

No, he's here well enough. The sweet young princeling is here. I've slaved for him, that I have. I've kept him safe and from all harm. Oh, what a day! What a day!

Edijio

I bring here a letter from her Majesty which I am commanded to read to you. (*He clears his throat.*) "Her Majesty the Queen and her suite will shortly follow the bearer of this letter—"

She might have written my name. It's a good one and worthy of mention. However—"will shortly follow the bearer of this letter——"

Maria

Shortly follow? Kind sir, forgive an old woman who has no learning—does that mean she's a-comin' here?

Edijio

She is. I was sent first to prepare the way.

Maria

Oh, what's to become of me? Let me be struck dead on this spot!

Edijio

Don't interrupt. "To claim her son, the Prince of Daranthenay, who was taken when an infant, to the house of Guiseppe and Maria Flagioli——

Maria

Oh! Oh!

Edigio

Don't interrupt. "At the time of the uprising at the capitol. As Guiseppe and Maria Flagioli were worthy folk living a simple and healthy life, it was the wish of the king that the Prince of Daranthenay remain with them until he reached the age of eighteen, to be brought up as their own son, in ignorance of his royal blood. Hoping thus

to prove his theory that the heir to a throne is dwarfed by the knowledge of his great future and would grow to larger mental stature if——

Maria

Oh, don't read any more, kind sir. It's a muddle of words in my poor head and I can't think.

Edijio (*folding the letter*)

It's just as well. I prefer a better audience. The rest, without the embroidery, means that you must produce the Prince of Daranthenay at once.

Maria

Oh, lawks! Produce him, you say. If it was as easy as it sounds. (*She calls at the door of the hut.*) Tomasso! Tomasso!

(Tomasso *appears. He is a boy of eighteen, short and thin.*)

Edijio

Is this the prince? If so, I must make my obeisance to him, but I don't choose to waste it.

Maria

Have mercy upon us and all in this house! I don't know.

Edijio

Don't know? Is the woman mad?

Maria (*calling frantically*)

Daniello! Daniello! (*To* Tomasso.) Where is Daniello?

Tomasso

He is hunting, as always. Killing some happy creature that we may eat him for our supper. (*To* Edijio.) It is by this method that my mother and I remain the happy creatures that you see.

Maria

Call him, my son—your Highness—oh, oh, what shall I do? He must come, and quickly.

Edijio

Who is Daniello?

Tomasso

Daniello is my brother. (*He goes to the edge of the clearing and calls loudly. There is a faint answer from the depths of the wood.*) He is coming. What do you want of him?

Edijio

He, whom you call "Daniello" is, then, the prince?

Tomasso

You seem to be searching for princes. I advise you to go elsewhere, for there are none in the

forest except, of course, the prince of darkness, who, the priests tell us, is everywhere.

Edijio

You have a surprise in store for you, boy. Do you enjoy surprises?

Tomasso

Very much; for here they are as rare as princes. We see strange miracles, it is true. The rising of the sun, than which there can be no greater wonder, the swift growth of a mushroom, the blossoming of the stars—but these are miracles that have grown stale through frequent repetition. So much so that the mere appearance of a fellow like you on horseback can serve to divert us from them.

Edijio

You have a sharp tongue.

Tomasso

In this place my brother's arrows are sharper.

Maria

Don't mind him, kind sir. He has a sharp tongue, as you say, and he will always be talking. Get you down from your horse and rest yourself. Fetch the gentleman a mug of ale, Tomasso. Though Heaven forgive me if I shouldn't be ask-

ing you to wait on him! My head is in a whirl this day and I don't know where I stand.

(TOMASSO *brings the ale and gives it to* EDIJIO, *who raises it to his lips but lowers it again as he hears* DANIELLO'S *call near by.*)

Maria

Daniello!

(DANIELLO *runs toward them, with bow and arrow: he makes a striking contrast to* TOMASSO, *as he is tall and splendidly built.*)

Daniello

I had good luck to-day, mother. A fowl, see! I shot him as he was rising from the pool.

Tomasso

A fowl! Aha! (*He takes it in his hands.*) And rising from the pool? Let's strip him of his feathers and stuff him with sage and onions, for now he can rise no higher than our throats.

(EDIJIO *throws his ale to the ground and kneels before* DANIELLO.)

Edijio

Your Highness, let me be the first to pledge my lifelong loyalty and to swear by my sword——

Daniello (*angrily*)

Who is this man? Is he mocking me?

Tomasso

He is a fool, but harmless. Certainly a fool, for he thinks he sees in every man—a prince. The idea has a certain beauty.

Edijio (*getting up hastily and dusting his knees*)

Then this isn't the prince? Where is he? Come, speak the truth, woman. I've had enough of this.

Maria

He is here. One of these boys is the prince. I swear it by all that's holy—but heaven help me, I don't know which it is!

Tomasso

One of us is a prince? Ah, that explains many things I had not understood before.

Daniello

A prince! What nonsense!

Maria (*wailing*)

He was such a little baby when he was brought to me—only this big, you know (*she measures it with her hands*), as babies are, and my son was the same size. He had an amulet about his neck. Oh, why did I go away to nurse my sick mother!

Very sick, she was, of rheumatism, and about to die. My husband, Guiseppe, God rest his soul, took care of them when I was away. He was a kind man, but careless. Men are careless, gentle sir, especially the kind ones. He lost the amulet——

Edijio

He lost the amulet?

Maria

Yes, that's what he did, my lord, and we couldn't find it anywhere. They used to chew on it, that they did, both of 'em, before they had their little teeth.

Edijio

But surely you could tell them apart.

Maria

Yes, most certainly I could, sir, before I went away. The prince was thin and my son was fat, but my mother had a long sickness, kind sir—it took her a year to die—and when I came back, what with good goat's milk and all, they were both fat—so fat and rosy it would do your heart good. Blue eyes they had, and yellow hair, and I not having had time scarcely to look at my own baby, what with my mother coming down so sudden——

Edijio

But your husband — Guiseppe. He must have——

Maria

Men! What do men know of babies! They can never tell 'em apart if they are as different as day and night.

Edijio

Here's a pretty state of affairs! You'll hang for this, like as not.

Maria

Oh! Oh!

Tomasso (*drawing a long breath*)

A king's son! It is I!

Daniello

It is I!

Tomasso

Something within tells me that I am he.

Daniello

I also feel it.

Tomasso

My dear Daniello, you are strong, you are agile, but—forgive me—also you are dumb. You go crashing through the forest with the thoughtlessness of a stag, those brothers of yours whom you kill with such unerring aim. It is easy to see that

you come from a long line of foresters, simple creatures who took things as they found them, as do the birds and beasts. I am the product of centuries of civilization, of thought. External things react in me with a poignancy akin to pain. The mere falling of a leaf can cut for me a luminous streak in the general density, an opening through which I catch glimpses of the meaning of life. My body is as you see it, a poor thing, perhaps, a slender gold pin on which is set the flashing jewel of my mind. In brief, I search food for thought. You go in search of food for the stomach——

Daniello (*angrily*)

Your stomach would suffer if I did not.

Tomasso

True. And that again proves my assertion. In another life, no doubt, you brought me my bodily sustenance on a silver salver. I partook thereof unthinkingly, while occupied with affairs of greater import.

Daniello

By Heaven, I'd run you through for this insolence, were you able to defend yourself!

Tomasso

What king defends himself? He employs others for that purpose. (*To* EDIGIO.) My lord, defend me. Great lands and riches shall be your reward.

Edijio (*with a laugh*)

I like this fellow. He is astonishing!

Daniello (*his sword drawn*)

Will you fight for him?

Edijio

Not until I know whether I be fighting for my prince or against him.

(*There is a distant sound of bugles and music.*)

The queen! Now we shall see.

Maria (*in terror*)

Tomasso, save me! Save me, Daniello!

Daniello

No harm shall come to you, Maria, or they'll feel the point of my sword!

Tomasso

Swords become strangely blunt in the presence of royalty. You had better trust to me, Maria. I'll save you with my wits.

Maria

Maria! They both call me Maria! Oh, Heaven! Now I have no son!

(THE QUEEN *and her company can be seen wending their way through the forest. Two heralds walk before, and a jester dances beside her white horse. She wears a trailing gown of purple. The lady* EMILIA, *in blue, rides behind. They at last come to a stop before the hut of* MARIA. GRIMAND, *the jester, throws himself down and rolls on the grass.*)

Grimand

Ach! Now we can rest ourselves! Let us hope that your Majesty has no more sons or daughters hid away in strange parts of the world. (*Plaintively.*) I tumbled into a brook and the fishes laughed at me.

The Queen

The fish flattered you, my dear Grimand. You are not amusing. Lie in the sun and dry your cap and bells. They are out of tune. (*She looks about her, smiling.*) I find it charming here, quite charming. The pillars of my audience-chamber are not higher than these trees, and that grass is, I feel sure, as soft to the feet as the carpets of my palace.

Tomasso

'Tis but a mean effort on the part of nature,

madam, to rival your splendor for her children, the poor.

The Queen (*haughtily*)

And has nature neglected to teach her children that one may not address a queen without permission?

Tomasso

With the child of a queen, madam, nature has little to do. Since I am a prince and have the honor to be your son, I may speak when I choose.

The Queen

My son! Ah, how delightful! You can't think with what joy I have come to claim you or how trying it has been for me to have had to conform for so long to this odious experiment of your father's. He expects to write a book on his theory that a royal prince should be brought up in ignorance of his destiny, and when people write books they think nothing else of such importance. These eccentricities of the king's are trying at times, I must confess.

Tomasso

I only hope that I shall prove that my father's theory was a good one.

Daniello (*hotly*)

It's not true, your Majesty. He is an impostor. —*I* am the prince.

The Queen

Indeed! So we find impostors even in the heart of nature, where all has been reported so genuine? (*She looks at* DANIELLO *a minute, then smiles.*) What beauty! How straight you are! Here I see the son of my imagination. You are exactly as I had expected him to be.

Tomasso

Reality never comes up to our expectations, your Majesty. In me behold your dream, shrivelled down to actual fact.

The Queen

Summon Maria Flagioli.

Maria (*throwing herself at* THE QUEEN'S *feet*)

Have mercy, your Majesty! Have mercy! It was no fault of mine, indeed it wasn't.

The Queen

What was no fault of yours?

Maria

That my mother took sick, as she did, and, what with good goat's milk and all, they were both

so different when I came back, and Guiseppe, God rest his soul, paid no heed——

The Queen (*to* EDIJIO)

Translate this for me.

Edijio

Your Majesty, this woman left the children when they were infants. She was gone a year. When she came back they had changed mightily.

Maria

As babies do, your Majesty. Little soft, red things they are, and then, before you know it, you see them——

The Queen

Silence!

Edijio

Her husband lost the amulet.

The Queen

And these two boys?

Edijio

One of them is the prince, your Majesty.

The Queen

This is what comes of the king's absurd experiments! Will he never be satisfied to do things properly, according to tradition! This search for

progress, as he calls it, inevitably leads to entanglements. (*To* MARIA.) You shall be punished.

Maria

Mercy, your Majesty!

Daniello

He who touches her will do so over my dead body!

The Queen (*sweetly*)

That will be quite simple.

Tomasso

And what, your Majesty, is the object of punishment? I ask for instruction.

The Queen

The object of punishment is to place in the culprit a fear of repeating his offense, to make of him an example so that others will not attempt his crime, and also, though this must not be considered important, to give to the one who punishes the satisfaction of combining personal vengeance with dignity.

Grimand

So we box the ears of kitty cat when he steals the cream!

Tomasso

Then why—again I ask for instruction, since it

is certain that either Daniello or I must learn these things—why does your Majesty waste so potent a weapon as punishment upon Maria, who very obviously can never repeat her offense?

The Queen

Maria has annoyed me. Besides one must do something.

Tomasso

And do you not find riddles diverting, your Majesty?

Grimand

Riddles! Ha, we live on them! The palace is riddled with riddles!

Tomasso

Then Maria has done you the greatest of services. She has provided your Majesty with amusement. Here is a charming riddle. Which does a queen give to the world in her child, strength of matter or strength of mind?

The Queen

Ah! When one looks at it that way the situation *is* rather amusing. I was beginning to think that all the best riddles had been solved. How delightful! You are free, Maria. (*She dismounts*,

with the aid of EDIJIO.) I find it impossible to decide things on horseback.

Daniello

Let me fetch for your Majesty a chair from the house.

Tomasso

No; this moss-covered boulder with my lord's rich cloak over it (*he takes the cloak from the shoulders of* EDIJIO *and spreads it on the boulder*) makes a more fitting throne.

The Queen

This is not a very comfortable throne, Tomasso.

Tomasso

No, your Majesty, but it is an aristocratic one. Leave chairs to the middle classes. A queen should sit on a real throne or, failing that, a rock.

(THE QUEEN *sits down, the lady* EMILIA *stands behind her.* GRIMAND *lies at her feet. She looks searchingly first at* DANIELLO, *then at* TOMASSO, *who stand before her.*)

The Queen

What do you make of this, Emilia? I neglected to mention that with the title of Prince goes the Lady Emilia's hand.

Emilia

Your Majesty, it is very disappointing to have expected a husband and to find instead a riddle.

The Queen

That is what always happens, my dear Emilia. Grimand, advise me.

Grimand

Take them both, your Majesty. Let Daniello rule on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, and Tomasso the rest of the week.

The Queen

That would be absurd.

Grimand

Then find out which of 'em desires the title and take the other one, for who ever heard of a commoner who did not wish to be king. Who ever heard of a king who did not wish to be a commoner.

The Queen

They both desire it.

Grimand

Pooh! Let's go back. They are both commoners!

The Queen

Tell me, Daniello—what would you do if you were in my position?

Daniello

I should move heaven and earth to find the truth.

The Queen

This is an honest man as well as a comely one. You might find him useful, Emilia.

Emilia

I find him comely, your Majesty. That is enough.

The Queen (*with a laugh*)

Naturally, this riddle has no difficulties for the Lady Emilia. And Tomasso——?

Tomasso

I should at once take the one who most pleased me, your Majesty.

The Queen (*in feigned horror*)

What! And perhaps deceive the people?

Tomasso

I should not have the least scruple about deceiving the people. They would learn to swallow what I gave them.

The Queen (*reflectively*)

This one might be useful to *me*.

Edijio

Your Majesty, do you not feel in the least drawn toward one or the other? We men know little of those things, but we have been told by women that the maternal instinct is the strongest on earth and will not be deceived.

The Queen

The maternal instinct. Oh, yes, I have heard of that, too. (*Again she looks intently first at one, then at the other.*) But I'm afraid that I don't feel it—not in the least. Isn't it dreadful of me!

Edijio

Perhaps if your Majesty would condescend to take them by the hand——

The Queen

Edigio, is that necessary?

Edigio

It would be a noble sacrifice on the part of her Majesty for her child.

[THE QUEEN *sighs.*)

The Queen

Then I must do it. (*She takes the hand of* DANIELLO *and of* TOMASSO *and holds them an instant. The lady* EMILIA *watches her breathlessly.*)

Yes—ah, yes! Undoubtedly there is something! My right arm feels at this moment far more maternal than my left. Daniello—it is Daniello! You are my son!

Emilia

Your Majesty, I knew it. I knew it.

The Queen (*still holding* DANIELLO'S *hand*)

Are you, by any chance, double-jointed in your right thumb? The king, your father, is double-jointed in his right thumb.

Tomasso

I am double-jointed in my right thumb, your Majesty.

The Queen (*dropping* DANIELLO'S *hand*)

You! That spoils it. Two proofs on opposite sides of a question naturally cancel each other. How annoying!

Edijio

Has your Majesty, perhaps, any—er—characteristics that might have been inherited?

The Queen (*haughtily*)

My lord Edijio, I should greatly prefer that we confine our discussion to the possible inherited characteristics of my son's father, the king. (EDIJIO *bows.*) However, since the duties of

motherhood appear to be always of a personal nature, I feel compelled to state that there is, on my left shoulder-blade, a mole, the tiniest possible little mole, like the prick of a black pencil. Marie Flagioli, have you noticed a mole on the shoulder-blade of either of these two boys?

Maria

That I haven't, your Majesty. Their backs are as white as snow. How often have I held 'em on my lap, when they were babies, squirming and kicking after their bath, and——

The Queen

Again we seem to be at a standstill.

Grimand

I have it, your Majesty. I advised you to take both before, but I know a better way. Discard them, sweep them out of the question, and make me prince instead. There's been many a fool on a throne before this.

The Queen

And there's been many a fool flogged for his impudence. My lord Edijio, I have come to the conclusion that it is not by external signs that we shall reach the truth of this matter. My son, chosen by divine right to be a leader of his people,

must hold within him an inspiration, a fiery quickness of spirit, that would be lacking in the child of this peasant woman. That must be so. If it were not, why—why should he be set above you?

Edijio

Why, indeed, your Majesty?

The Queen

Therefore, by questioning them I shall discover which has the true instincts of a prince. Daniello, if, when you were king, your people came to you with demands that appeared to be just, but which, if you granted them, would threaten your comfort, what would you do?

Daniello

I should grant them, your Majesty.

The Queen

And Tomasso?

Tomasso (*after short consideration*)

I should give them an answer so cleverly worded that it would appear to give them more than they asked for, but in reality would change nothing. Thus we would both be satisfied.

The Queen

Daniello, suppose one of your subjects threatened your life?

Daniello

I should kill him first.

(The Queen *turns to* Tomasso.)

Tomasso

I should thank him for thinking my life of such value that he wished to take it, and surround myself with guards.

The Queen

If your country were threatened with revolution, Daniello?

Daniello

Your Majesty, I should crush the revolutionists.

The Queen

And you, Tomasso?

Tomasso

I should make the leader of the revolutionists my prime minister.

The Queen

Ah, this is illuminating! Kneel to Daniello, all of you. Cry "Long live King Daniello!"

Emilia

Oh, your Majesty, I was sure it was he. He is so beautiful, so splendid!

The Queen

Will you do homage to his beauty?

Emilia

So gladly, with all my heart!

(*They all bow before* DANIELLO *and cry "Long live King Daniello!"*)

The Queen

And how do you feel after that little tribute, my dear Daniello?

Daniello

It embarrasses me, your Majesty. It is I—I who should be at the feet of the Lady Emilia. (*He helps her to rise.*)

The Queen

Kneel now to Tomasso. Cry "Long live Tomasso."

Emilia

Oh, no! I beseech your Majesty.

The Queen

Do as I bid you.

(EDIJIO, DANIELLO, *the Lady* EMILIA, *the guards, etc.: "Long live King Tomasso!"*)

Tomasso (*with a shout of triumph*)

Aye, long live King Tomasso indeed! Stream after him, dull fowl that you are, as he follows the light of his vision! Fight for him, die for him, bow down before the terrible magic of his genius,

that you can feel but never hope to comprehend! He alone can see. His eyes shall be the eyes of a nation. He will lead you through dark places to the glorious fulfilment of his destiny and write his name on the heavens in immortal letters of flame! Tomasso! Long live King Tomasso!

The Queen

Good gracious! This succeeded even better than I had hoped. We need no further proof. This is indeed my son. (*She rises and takes* TOMASSO *by both hands.*) My child, it was splendid. What a speech! A little overdone, perhaps, but in time you will learn moderation. Embrace me. Had you prepared it beforehand?

Tomasso

My whole life has been but a preparation for that moment. When I saw them at my feet, something crashed within me. I stood alone, far above, and thought of them as so much clay with which I could mould my dreams into reality.

The Queen

Yes, I also have felt that way a little. But let me warn you, dear child, it's just as well not to be too frank about it. Emilia, come. You shall be Tomasso's bride.

Emilia

No, your Majesty, I implore you—I can't.

The Queen

Your hand is to be bestowed on the Prince of Darantheray. That was arranged years ago.

Emilia

It is impossible for me to give my hand without my heart, your Majesty.

The Queen

It has been done very often before, Emilia. They do not necessarily go to the same person. Your hand is all I wish. With your heart you may do as you please.

Emilia

Hearts are not so easily controlled. Mine flew away, through no wish of my own, and now all that is left of me must follow it or I shall die.

The Queen

This is nonsense. You will live and live long—a queen!

Emilia

A lute without strings is dead, your Majesty.

The Queen

My commands and the commands of the king shall be obeyed.

Emilia

Daniello!

(DANIELLO *springs to her side.*)

Daniello

What do we care for your kingdom! We have found a greater one, a kingdom of the gods! Nothing can hurt us, for we have been lifted to a lonely height where time is not, nor change, and the scented air is golden bright with the beauty of our love! Emilia! (*He kisses her hand.*)

Tomasso

This flight to the kingdom of love has loosened Daniello's tongue.

The Queen

Only to say things that have been expressed too often and better before. Emilia, your "lonely height" is much frequented and one falls from it more swiftly than one rises to it.

Emilia

I am there, your Majesty. The present holds such loveliness that it is impossible to think of the future.

The Queen

Nevertheless, you shall marry the Prince of

Daranthenay. The people expect it. We have promised.

Emilia (*to* Tomasso)

Your Highness, will you do as the people expect, or choose your own bride? Let your first act as prince be one of mercy, the granting of happiness to me and to Daniello.

Tomasso (*after brief consideration*)

You prefer brief happiness to lifelong glory, Lady Emilia?

Emilia

We are asking for lifelong happiness, your Highness.

Tomasso

Lifelong happiness! (*He laughs.*) As well expect the sun to shine forever! Joy is as brief as a song and as short-lived as a flower. He is a fool who presses his nose to the gates of happiness longing to enter, for no sooner do they open a little way, revealing the loveliness within, than they are shut again in his face. Will you let the gods thus play tricks with you or proudly turn your back and look the other way?

Emilia

We shall go through the gates, your Highness,

hand in hand. How can you speak of happiness, who have never loved!

Tomasso

My dear mother, this is no mate for me. Must I drag her along after me as I travel toward my tremendous goal, when she would rather be chasing images?

The Queen

Don't you think that this is a little—well, a little— It's very interesting, dear Tomasso, to hear you speak of your tremendous goal and all, but she would make such a pretty queen. That is so important.

Tomasso

My father chose a beautiful queen. For all I care, let mine be plain as a withered leaf, but one who understands that each day is but a fresh tool in my hand to help me accomplish my purpose.

The Queen

Yes, your father did, didn't he? He was very particular about it. A plain queen. How strange that will be. Still, it might also be amusing.

Edijio

Then, as before, your Majesty's superiority will remain undisputed.

The Queen

Well, of course, that will be much more pleasant for me. Marry your Daniello, then, Emilia, if you wish to be so foolish.

Tomasso

We shall make him chief forester, for Daniello in a palace would be as a lion in a cage.

The Queen

That can be arranged.

Grimand

And let the tame canary bird out of its cage into the forest! Beware of cats!

The Queen

You, Maria, shall be bountifully rewarded for your faithful service.

Maria

Your Majesty is good, but no woman wants a greater reward than to see her child grow, day by day, with all its pretty ways—and now he is to leave me, and my heart is sore.

The Queen

Maria, how dare you! He is not your child!

Maria (*weeping*)

Forgive me, your Majesty, I feel as if he was.

The Queen

Conquer that feeling. It is presumptuous. Come, we must start. The king eagerly awaits our arrival. Throw this cloak of Edijio's about your shoulders, Tomasso, so that you may be properly dressed for your entrance into the city.

Tomasso

I prefer to go as I am. Homespun makes as great a display where all wear velvet as does velvet among homespun.

The Queen

What an original idea! I predict a great future for you. Come, Emilia.

Emilia

Why should I go, your Majesty, since I am to marry Daniello?

The Queen

But surely not at once!

Daniello

The priest who gave us instruction lives near here, in the forest. He will marry us to-day if your Majesty be willing.

The Queen

But, my dear Emilia, your clothes, your jewels.

Emilia

I shall have no need of silks and satins, your Majesty, and the dew on the grass will be my jewels.

The Queen

The dew enhances but the beauty of the grass. You will soon tire of it and desire jewels more flattering. However, when that happens, you may come for them. Until then, farewell.

(*She stretches out her hand.* EMILIA *and* DANIELLO *kiss it.*

The heralds take their places before THE QUEEN, TOMASSO *rides beside her and after them,* EDIJIO *leading lady* EMILIA'S *horse.*)

Maria (*excitedly*)

Wait, wait, your Majesty! I've just remembered. Oh, lawks, the days drift by in the forest, one just like the other, and after years have passed nothing seems to matter any more but the rain you know, and the sun, and whether the goat's gone dry, and if there's food to cook for supper——

The Queen

What is it now, Maria?

Maria

The prince, two crowns he had to his head—two

little swirls of hair, your Majesty, at the back of his head, where most men have one.

Emilia (*triumphantly*)

Daniello has two crowns to his head. (*To* DANIELLO.) Lean over. You see, I noticed it at once!

The Queen

Dear me, this complicates things. Are you sure, Maria?

Maria (*hesitatingly*)

Almost sure, your Majesty. How sweet it is, that little wheel of hair on the head of a boy! He had two of them. I think it was the prince; perhaps it was my son. I couldn't swear——

Tomasso

This is of no importance. If a man has already two crowns, would you give him another? Let there be no further delay. We must start.

The Queen

Yes. There is no doubt but three crowns, as the prince has so wisely said, would be superfluous. (*To the heralds.*) Proceed!

(*The heralds blow their horns. The procession starts again, winds its way slowly through the*

trees, and disappears. MARIA *follows to the edge of the clearing.*)

Emilia (*with a stamp of her foot*)

How unjust! You are the prince. I knew it from the beginning.

Daniello

What does it matter? Your clear eyes, the fragrance of your hair are more to me than many kingdoms.

Emilia (*pouting*)

But you might have had both, the kingdom and me.

Daniello

No; for then I would have had to share you with the world. Now you are mine—mine alone.

Emilia

Yours alone! And this green silence is a better setting for love than the glare and activity of the palace. Besides—there are other ladies at court, with hair as fragrant as mine.

Daniello

There is not one in the world whom I could love as I do you.

Emilia

If you think that, Daniello, I can see that it is

far better for us to remain here. Is it always as still as this? Oh, I feel as if I had just begun to live. The country is beautiful. I can't think why I have neglected it for so long. Even without you I should be happy in this place, but with you, ten hundred times more!

Daniello

Until you came, I never saw its beauty.

Emilia

Oh, I long to shed this gown of stiff brocade, let down my hair and dance, barefoot, in the grass.

Daniello

I long to see you do it.

Emilia (*pleadingly*)

Daniello, you don't believe what they said, that our love will wither, fade, and die? You don't believe it, Daniello?

Daniello

Never. It's stronger than life, stronger than death. For when I die I shall lie in the darkness, dreaming of you, only of you.

Emilia

It's deliriously sweet to hear you say that.

Daniello

I am bound to you by a silver cord. It may spin out and grow thin when I am old, but it can never break.

Emilia

I have known them to break, those silver cords —so often and so soon. Oh well, what can it matter? This would be enough to live for if it were only for a day.

(MARIA *comes back, wiping her eyes on her apron.*)

Maria

Tomasso, my Tomasso! Now he's gone, and who'll take care of him and me not near? What a tongue he has, that boy! He could always get his own way.

Daniello

He had his own way, because I preferred that he should.

Maria

Oh, my lady, my lady, how can you live this rough life like us?

Emilia

It must not necessarily be very rough, Maria, since Daniello is to be chief forester.

Daniello

Go now, and fetch Father Francisco, mother, that he may marry us.

Maria

Oh, aye. A grand, fine daughter I'll have now, my lady, if you'll excuse my saying so, instead of a son. Daniello, put wood on the fire. I'll be back directly.

(*She goes.* EMILIA *and* DANIELLO *move slowly toward the house, her head on his shoulder.*)

Emilia

And will you love me forever, Daniello?

Daniello

Until I die.

Emilia (*stopping, with a stamp of her foot*)

You said that you would love me after you had died.

Daniello

Until the world is dust. Even then I shall lie in the darkness and dream of you, only of you.

Emilia

That's better. They go on. Poor Tomasso. His is such a stupid kingdom compared to ours. I love you.

Daniello

I love you. I love you, Emilia.

Emilia

Always?

Daniello

Until I d— Always.

(*They go into the house and shut the door. The faint sound of a horn, in the far distance, hangs on the air an instant, then dies away.*)

CURTAIN